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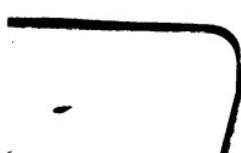
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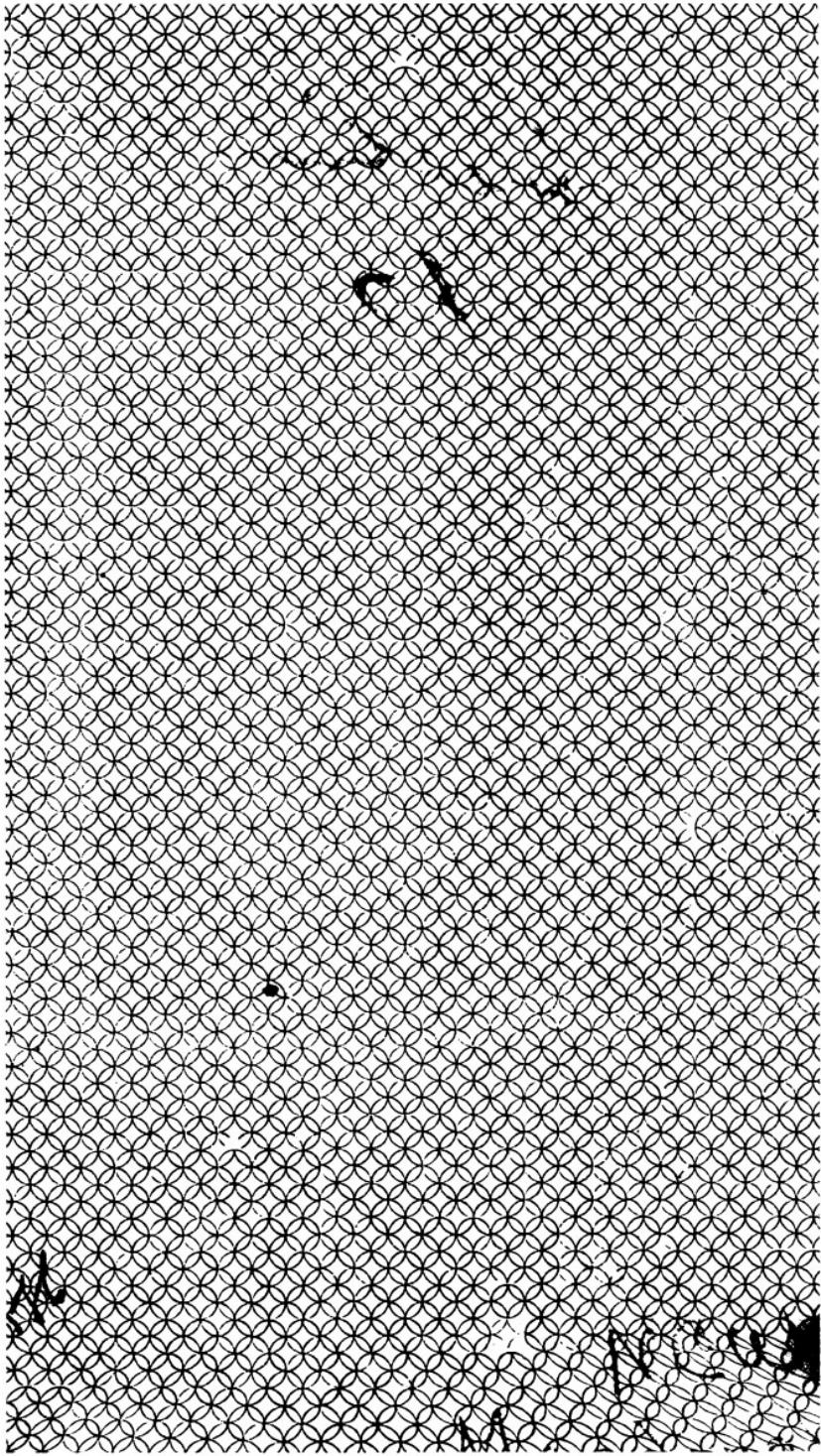
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Interesting

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VILLA VEROCCHIO.

London :
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VILLA VEROCCHIO:

OR,

THE YOUTH OF LEONARDO DA VINCI.

A Tale.

BY THE LATE

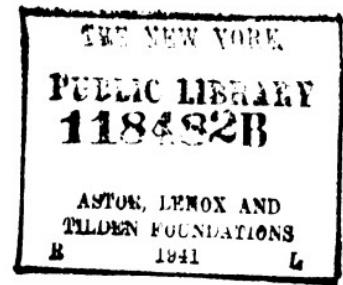
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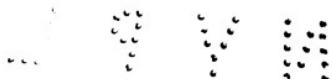
VILLA VEROCCCHIO.

CHAPTER I.

WHO has wandered in that enchanting part of Tuscany, called the Upper Val d'Arno, without partaking of the enchantment! Who can be indifferent or blind to the beauties of that favoured valley! The sky of Italy; the verdure rivalling and surpassing that of more northern countries; the glorious sunshine, the orchards, vineyards and gardens, churches and villages, covering and adorning the little hillocks; then the graceful Arno and its tributary brooks flowing in the midst, and watering the whole land, while, as a barrier against the cruel northern blasts, the majestic Apennines, in their purple robe, rise high in the blue vault of heaven, true protectors of the little paradise beneath!

The Val d'Arno is then the scene of this narrative, and at the time we speak of, nearly four centuries ago, was as perfect in its beauty as at this moment, though civilisation may have destroyed the last vestiges of those feudal and warlike times, and added the charm of peace.

In the year 1464, there stood, in one of the most charming nooks of the valley, a solid and tasteful building, called the Villa Verocchio, belonging to the already celebrated artist of that name, and visited by him as frequently as his occupations at Florence permitted. The artist's taste had assisted in the choice of the dwelling; for the position of the house, commanding a view far up and down the valley, and yet neither exposed to sun nor wind,—the deep rich shade of the clustering trees,—the glimpses of the blue mountains in the distance, whose varied hues were the delight of the painter,—these were more highly valued by Andrea del Verocchio than the spacious apartments and their architectural decorations. Here, far from the daily traffic of a great city, Verocchio's genius was at once undisturbed and inspired; the great school of Nature was ever present, and while studying her simple but perfect lessons,



the mind of the artist was rendered more apt (because more calm) to comprehend and appreciate them. But, besides the attractions afforded by the quiet retirement of the villa, Verocchio had one yet greater in presence of his only child, his daughter Angela, who, since the age of two years, when she lost her mother, had been confided to the care of a great-aunt, Donna Placida by name.

The Villa Verocchio, though situated in a retired spot, was yet not quite secluded, the village of F——, with its little church, being but some few hundred yards off; and at the distance of half a mile was the residence of the protonegotary, Pietro da Vinci, a man of easy fortune but narrow mind, in which deficiency lay the true reason why he and his neighbour Verocchio had never become intimate. Still there existed a strong link between the houses. When the artist first took possession of his new property, the little Angela was about four years old, and already wore the serious thoughtful expression natural to all children who have no companion of their own age. Many weeks, however, had not elapsed, before a friendship arose between her and a ruddy dark-haired boy of six or

seven, who came and played with her at the bottom of the garden, where a large hole in the hedge favoured his ingress, for many days before his visits were discovered. This was Pietro da Vinci's son, a child of such noble bearing and generous countenance, that Verocchio suffered him as a visitor and companion to his daughter, not sorry that she should have a playfellow who would wile away her precocious gravity. Farther than this, however, Verocchio did not trouble himself concerning Angela; internally she was his idol, his treasure: but he seldom testified these feelings; he took too large a view of affection to be able to adapt it to the sympathies of a timid child; and attributing the evident shyness which she evinced towards him to the whims of infancy, the father looked forward impatiently to the time when his daughter could participate in his feelings, and enter fully into the lofty schemes which the artist's ambition depicted to him. Verocchio's character was strongly tinged with ambition; had he had less, it is probable he would have been a greater artist; but, as it was, his love of art, and even his love of Angela, were second to his ambition, and made subservient to it. Angela, therefore, regarded her father with

more fear than love ; she had remembered seeing him once very angry, and the impression then made was lasting ; even when he kissed her and smiled, she trembled under the caress. Her great-aunt Placida scolded and coaxed by turns ; but she had no partiality for children, and usually sent Angela to play by herself upon all occasions when she could do so without giving further trouble. Thus Angela hardly knew what affection was, until, of a sudden, new life dawned upon the child by the appearance of young Da Vinci. Every thing tended towards the attachment of the two children ; they were unconsciously very similarly situated, and both their hearts now found mutual sympathy for the first time. The young Da Vinci had lost his mother while yet an infant, and he had now a step-mother at home, whom he loved no better than Angela did Donna Placida. Pietro da Vinci took no pains to study his son's character, and continually complained that he could not understand the child ; in the like ignorance he often blamed when he should have praised, and the boy dreaded his home so much, that whenever it was possible he wandered out for hours together, sometimes to great distances, without caring

whither he went. It was in one of these excursions that he met Angela.

Six years had elapsed since that happy day ; Angela was in her eleventh year, her friend some two years older ; and if the time we have mentioned had worked some change in both, it had certainly altered their affection to one another in no way. They both loved each other as beings who possessed no other friends they could love with the same ardour ; they both felt lonely in the world ; what wonder, then, that their happiness arose solely from their mutual affection ? it was so innocent, so natural, so free from selfishness. It gave, however, no satisfaction to any one else, except, perhaps, to Donna Placida, who could daily take her siesta without any fears about Angela, while her companion was there to roam about with her. Verrocchio, indeed, began to hint to his aunt the expediency of breaking off the intimacy with the boy Da Vinci, now that Angela was of an age to be the companion more or less of the Signora Placida ; but this suggestion was not much relished, the dame rightly foreseeing it would cost her some trouble to enforce the companionship, and as her nephew came generally but once

a week to the villa, she did not pay much regard to his directions. Thus days and weeks rolled on, and the two children's hearts grew insensibly together, entwined round about with the strong bands of childish sympathy.

Among the shady bosquets most carefully preserved and tended in Verocchio's garden, was one which had ever been a favourite with the children. It was planted round with the lovely oleander, amongst whose branches the climbing honeysuckle, jessamine, and clematis each strove for place, loading the pure air with their sweet perfume. High above, rose a stately group of the dark stone-pine, forming a striking contrast to the soft yellow-green acacia and spreading lime. The foliage of these various trees was so amalgamated and entwined together, that it formed an almost impenetrable shield against the searching sun-beams, while yet a soft glow of warmth was felt beneath,—the influence of the sun without its oppressive heat.

In the centre rose a tiny, sparkling stream, for which a marble basin, roughly shaped as a shell, had been constructed years before. In this spot were the first violets and primroses to be

found, the early attractions to the two children: but now that they were older, they loved the place because it was so quiet, so cool; they could see so far down the valley through the opening in the trees, and across also to the beautiful wooded mountain of Vallombrosa; then it was far away, too, from the uncertain temper of Donna Placida; and, in short, this bosquet was their little paradise.

It was here, therefore, that Angela awaited the coming of her dear friend, one clear bright morning of April. All Nature smiled, for lovely spring was gladdening the earth; the flowers already put forth their colours, and the boughs of the trees resounded with the chirping and singing of the numerous winged tribes.

Angela's countenance wore a peculiarly happy expression, and it would besides have been difficult to find a more charming union of classical outline with that roundness of contour, so particularly the attribute of childhood. From her mother she inherited the fair complexion and bright blue eyes which had captivated the painter; her hair, also, unlike the dark locks of her father, was of a golden brown, as if a sunbeam had been lost in it; while the

long dark eyelashes, with their rich warm shade, were the only marks betraying a southern birth. On the morning in question she was dressed simply and entirely in white, with a blue ribbon round her waist, and silken cord of the same colour to fasten the exuberant tresses, which, half ringlets, half plaited, were collected together in graceful confusion. As she now stood at the side of the fountain with a bunch of violets in one hand, and with the other gently besprinkling them with a few drops of water, she might well have personated Spring itself in all its loveliness. But before each violet had received the intended refreshment, quick footsteps were heard approaching ; upon which the bouquet was hastily laid down, and Angela sprang joyously forward to meet Da Vinci. She was not disappointed ; it was indeed her darling playmate.

“ You have not kept your promise, Leone,” exclaimed Angela, throwing her arms round him ; “ I have heard the mass bell ring ages ago, and you said you would be here before it tolled once ! ”

“ The fault is not mine, Angela,” answered the boy, upon whose countenance there seemed

the traces of displeasure ; "this is what kept me," said he, throwing down a small portfolio : "my father took it away, and refused to give it me back ; but you see I have it now. I did them for you, and they shall be yours."

So saying, he untied the string cast round the book, and displayed a number of loose drawings.

The delighted Angela knelt down beside him, hardly able to find words for her admiration.

Her companion was no common boy. His countenance, his look, his bearing, all were stamped with the impress of energy ; and even at that early age might have been found the germs of the fame which later immortalised the name of **LEONARDO DA VINCI**. But circumstances did not favour their development ; and Leonardo's active, restless mind, was obliged to stumble over many an obstacle which a guiding hand would have led him to avoid. His universal aptitude for instruction would alone have promised great results in the eyes of a zealous teacher : but Pietro da Vinci was much perplexed how to dispose of a clever son ; and that Leonardo was clever he did not doubt, for he could in nowise understand him.

The young Da Vinci's education, therefore, had only consisted of a course of instruction in Latin from the priest of the village, who both extolled his proficiency, and worked in the good cause by advising his pupil to devote his talents to the church ; on this point, however, the master and scholar never agreed. These lessons, moreover, were short, and the boy had many long hours at his own disposal. Still he was never idle. Already the fertile seeds of genius were busily exerting their yet infantine power ; dim shadows of something great and beautiful floated in the wide expanse of futurity ; there was a power at work which he felt must compass some end, but what that end would be was vague and undefined ; there was an oppressive longing for knowledge, a thirst after power of action, an idea that something great would be required of the man, and an impatience at the self-confessed ignorance of the boy. Hence the versatility of his tastes, of his occupations, and his mind. Hence his perseverance in the pursuit of scientific pastimes, and in exploring for himself the treasures of intellectual resources which he felt were hidden from him. Already he astonished those who knew him by

his singular aptitude for various things; mechanics, music, arithmetic, and drawing, all came alike to him, and were studied with the same interest. Continually at work, either bodily or mentally, the want of friends and directors was scarcely felt by the boy himself, except on the score of affection, and had he not his dear Angela to fill that void?

As to Da Vinci's personal appearance, it was such that even his step-mother, with all her indifference, could not but admire him. Tall and well made, with the clear but dark complexion, and finely marked features of Italy, he possessed besides the more uncommon gift, an *intellectual* countenance. At times there was a marvellous light in his clear dark eye, and a piercing expression of hope would mingle among the varying shadows on his brow, betraying the sanguine nature of his reflections. Then again, when he forgot his lofty dreams, and gave himself wholly to Angela, playing with her, and inventing a thousand schemes for their mutual amusement, and always regarding his companion as requiring his protection, he was even more captivating, so entirely did he appear to be guided by feelings innately noble.

As Angela turned over the little collection of drawings before her, Leonardo stood watching the expression of her countenance, and enjoying the surprise depicted on it now and then ; for among the rest were some grotesque and hideous sketches of faces and figures, which occasioned many a hearty scream of laughter when discovered. But, on the other hand, the solemn head of a Jupiter, or lovely countenance of a Madonna, was fully admired ; and Angela was not content until she had separated the funny pictures from the others, a matter in which she evinced much discrimination.

“ There,” said she, as she laid them on either side, “ you lie there, and you here, you grim fellow, that is right—so. What a number you have done, Leone, dear, since the last. What have you done with those you took away?”

“ Done ?” answered her companion ; “ I scribbled my Latin over two or three, and made a kite of the others, but they have all been burnt since.”

“ Ah, well,” said Angela, gathering her new property together, “ you will not burn these, that is all ; they are mine, and I will run in this

very minute, and put them in my own closet, lest they get torn or dirty here."

"Make haste, then," replied Leonardo, laughing; "for I want you to come down to my mills — will you?"

"I will fly!" cried Angela, and sped away like lightning. The boy looked up at the sun, as if calculating what time of day it was, and then mechanically drew figures on the ground, with a little switch in his hand.

True to her intention, in a few minutes came Angela back, almost breathless, but with a half-frightened, half-roguish expression on her face.

"Quick, Leone!" she cried, as she gave him a gentle pull forward; "aunt is close behind; she tried to catch me, to make me go in and work the tapestry, but I ran away very fast — she is scolding so. — Oh! make haste through the hedge!"

The idea of being hunted by Aunt Placida was so amusing to Leonardo, that he actually went a few steps to ascertain if she really continued her pursuit, and perceiving that she meditated active measures, and was already near at hand, he quickly caught hold of Angela,

helped her to creep through a very diminutive gap in the boundary hedge, which often served the children's purposes, and then vaulted over himself just as the incensed matron arrived in the bosquet. They were then beyond pursuit, as neither Angela or Leonardo's mode of escape was suited to the Signora Placida; so, free for the time, they soon wandered through the vine-yard, down the hill, to the small petulant brook which the young Da Vinci made use of for trials of his own ingenuity.

In the present instance he had made a series of little mill-wheels, and fixed them upon a slight declivity at a few yards' distance from the brook; a small watercourse, contained in a scooped-out branch of wood, conducted his mimic mill-stream, and before long, to Angela's delight, the wheels began to spin round with great velocity; however, the grass soon became too wet to stand upon below the scene of action, and Leonardo would not be satisfied until he had constructed a channel similar to the one above, to take the stream back to the parent brook. By the time this was accomplished, the heat compelled both of them to give up further improvements, and to sit down under the trees to

rest ; the little mill-wheels kept turning within sight, and Angela's eyes were fixed upon them in silent delight ; but after her companion had thrown himself on the ground, he appeared to forget his late excitement, and to be occupied with some other subject. He turned himself in the direction of Florence, and gazed into the blue distance, as if he would push his sight to the desired object.

" See out there," said he to his companion, whose attention he found it was necessary to attract by pushing her gently ; " look as far as you can, more to the left — so !"

" Well, and what then ?" inquired Angela, who did not think the landscape an equivalent for her little spinning mill-wheels ; " what is to be seen ?" ¶

" Why, Angela, behind that sort of eminence, do you see, on a line with the bough of the acacia there, close to that little hill, is Florence ; and if the sun were but half gone down, you could see some white sparkling objects, which are the churches and palaces."

" Oh, how far off the city is !" exclaimed the child, turning round her head again towards the brook ; " no wonder the poor mules were

thirsty yesterday, after dragging the piece of marble all that way."

"Has fresh marble been sent, then, from Florence? What is it for?" returned Leonardo, raising himself a little.

"Oh! I cannot tell; my father was not there: but aunt and old Veronica disagreed about it, for aunt said it was to be a standing figure, and should be set on one end, and Veronica held that it should be laid flat down, because she felt sure it was to make a bath of; but I didn't listen much, because I was feeding the poor mules. Oh, dear me! one of the mills has stopped;" and off flew Angela to remedy the mischief.

Leonardo looked after her, smiling, but did not move. When she returned, he said, "I am tired of those paltry wheels, I shall break them up to-morrow, and try to make an aqueduct instead."

"Oh! you tiresome Leone!" cried Angela, "that is always the way with every thing; directly you have finished a pretty thing, and we begin to have fun with it, then you destroy it — it is too bad!"

"The fun is all on your side, Angela," re-

plied the boy ; “ for mine is over when the thing is completed. By the bye, did your father throw away any of his modelling clay two days ago ? I want some.”

“ Oh ! yes, he did ; but what did you do with the funny little man you made last week, with the hoofs and horns, you know ? ” said Angela.

“ And how often did I tell you it was not a little man, nor meant for one, you incorrigible piece of forgetfulness ? ” answered Leonardo, smiling.

“ Oh, dear ! to be sure, what was it you called it ? Tell me again — once more, Leone ! ”

“ A Faun,” said the boy. “ Why, surely, you never saw a man with hoofs like a goat ? ”

“ No, perhaps not,” answered the child, thoughtfully ; “ but I have never seen a Faun either. Where did you see one, Leone ? it is very ugly.”

To this Leonardo replied only by laughing, and it required all Angela’s perseverance to make her companion be serious, and confess he had never seen Fauns, except in an old picture, and had broken up his imitation of them.

“ You will model something pretty though, Leone, if I bring you some clay,” resumed

Angela, " and give it me too, do you hear ? I have a number of things, in my closet, now of yours, and I set them straight every day. But I don't show them to any body, except old Veronica sometimes. For what do you think, Leone ? Once, when my father came into my room, there was a drawing you had given me lying on a chair ; it was the head of the little child—you remember it—and when my father saw it, he took it up and said, ' How often have I given orders that no drawings or things whatever are to be taken away from my studio, or any other room where I may leave them, whether they be mine or my pupils ' ! ' And so he took it away with him, and I have not seen it since."

Leonardo had not at first listened very attentively to Angela, but towards the end of her speech, when she unconsciously imitated her father's manner, he became suddenly more interested.

" What ! " he exclaimed, " is it possible your father should have mistaken my drawing for that of one of his pupils ? "

" I suppose so," answered the child ; " and it was the one I liked best too. But now you

have brought me so many to-day, I don't care that he took it."

"But *I do!*" exclaimed Leonardo, springing up with sudden energy, "though he may have found out his mistake later." The boy remained a few instants occupied with some pleasing reflection, and then again seating himself—"Do you know, Angela," said he, "I am continually thinking of what I shall do when I am grown up,—what I shall be, I mean; there are very few great men in the world—how glorious, therefore, to be one of them!"

"Veronica," said Angela, "says that you are a born soldier; but that would take you away so far, I will not let you be one. You must always be here, you know."

"Ah! must I?" answered the young Da Vinci, kissing his little companion's forehead: "but how can that be, if I am to become a great man? I must go to the city yonder, and learn all that great men know. What can I do here?"

"Oh! the Padre will teach you, Leone; he is so clever, Veronica says. You know he can repeat the whole mass from beginning to end without once looking in his book!"

"Can he? Have you watched him so well?"

said Leonardo, slyly. "I will tell him to-morrow how attentive you are."

"I will pull your hair if you do. Take care!" answered the child, putting up a finger in a threatening way; "and promise me not to talk of being a great man, if you must go away to become one. What should I do, dear me! without you, Leone?"

"You need not fret yourself already, Angela," replied Da Vinci, in a low but almost sorrowful tone of voice; "it is not very likely to happen yet awhile—every thing goes *so* slowly—but *some* day, and then Angela, when I come back I will not again leave you."

This promise quieted Angela's fears, and she cared not that Leonardo remained sunk in a studious absent fit.

The sun had now risen to a height which forcibly made the companions think of returning to the house. Angela began to anticipate Aunt Placida's scolding, and could only console herself with asking Leonardo to be sure and come to the garden bosquet in the evening.

"Your father comes to-day, does he not?" inquired Da Vinci.

"Yes, with some friends," answered Angela.
"Do come!"

Leonardo shook his head.

"I will come and see your father when he is in his studio, but not when he has company, unless he has asked me," said he. "You know what Signora Placida said not ten days ago, that the Maestro had been right angered at your going with me that evening to the river side, when he wished for you at home; and was he not somewhat displeased with you, though the fault was mine in taking you? No, I shall not come. Your father would look on me as an intruder."

Angela, though not perceiving the truth of her companion's reason for refusing, knew well, by his decisive tone, that the matter was settled, and she therefore turned her buoyant hopes to the morrow's meeting. They walked quickly to avoid the sun, and when Angela had crept through the hedge of the garden, Leonardo did not follow her, but after a short parting turned in the direction of his own home, while Angela slowly proceeded to face her Aunt Placida's wrath.

CHAP. II.

IF the bosquet we have described was the most favourite spot of the two friends out of doors, an apartment, used as a studio by Verocchio, at the extremity of the house, would decidedly have rivalled their preference, but that it was forbidden ground. Here were stored both ancient and modern works of art, protected from the idle gaze of the ignorant or curious, and treasured by their possessor as the means of testing his own genius. It was here that the master-strokes of his brush or chisel were given to the creations of his fancy ; his eye was more keen, his hand more steady, and his judgment more decided than at Florence, when surrounded by pupils or admiring critics, and disturbed or interrupted at any moment. In this lofty, spacious apartment, where none but the most intimate were admitted, he could breathe more freely, and experience soon showed him that it was here and here only that his genius was unfettered. When, therefore, he came to

his favourite villa, the precious hours stolen, as it were, from days of unceasing though pleasant labour, were divided betwixt his luxuriant groves and his studio.

And here, on such occasions, were Angela and her friend admitted, when they often unconsciously became the models of what they afterwards admired. Apart from the presence of Leonardo, for the studio contained objects at which he was never weary of looking, and even Verocchio himself seemed a different person when engaged at some work on which his whole energy was centred. At such times the boy would feel an inward veneration which he could not account for, and when alone with Angela, would vent his fervent admiration by saying,— “He is surely a great man, your father, Angela!”

But this sanctum was forbidden ground to the children at all times, except when Verocchio himself bid them enter; and his rigorous orders on this point were most strictly adhered to by Donna Placida, not, perhaps, so much from her inherent love of art, as from a house-keeping passion for locking up, and adding

another member to her bunch of keys. For many months had Leonardo and Angela sought to win the entrance, but to no purpose; Placida was inflexible. She would neither allow them to go alone, nor give herself the trouble to go with them, which would have removed all danger as regarded the valuable gems.

However, foiled in their direct attack, stratagem was still open to them, and Leonardo was not slow in discovering that, with due precautions, the thing was not impracticable. The studio was lighted by three large windows, which, descending to within a couple of feet of the ground, looked out upon an elevated terrace; these windows were all furnished with outside shutters, which were fastened from within. By careful observation, it was found that Verocchio had given orders for one of these windows to be kept open during the day, on account of the smell from the newly finished oil paintings; and, most fortunately, Donna Placida, in perfect reliance upon her bunch of keys, usually set open one, of which the bolt of the shutter was broken. The young nimble spies, upon the day of this discovery, could scarcely restrain, until the dreaded Placida had

driven away to the market at Florence, their impatience to enter their acquired territory. And when, at last, they had both surmounted the sill of the window, and noiselessly closed the shutter again, it was with a deep feeling of unconscious awe that they looked around them. They did not at first speak out loud, but in a sort of whisper, and together they looked and gazed at each separate work of art with, perhaps, as pure and true a love as would have been felt by the cultivated critic or the most fastidious connoisseur. Nothing was touched, and when even a finger was raised to point out some peculiar beauty, it was held far from the object, with a natural sense of the power of sight, and not from fear of the consequences of injury. Born in an atmosphere of art, their young minds responded an echo to all that was beautiful; they possessed innately the enthusiasm which gradually and slowly is instilled into many northern intellects by months and years passed in the sunny climate of Italy. They felt that they regarded the objects here treasured up, not as toys, but as precious things; the works of great men, and reverenced by great men. Then they turned to Veroc-

chio's own works,—groups of sculpture, and paintings yet on the easel. Leonardo was most attracted by those unfinished; every separate part was examined and even criticised, while suggestions rose quickly to his lips, how this and that might be improved and altered, and how he would do it if he could paint. Had Verocchio heard those first-born criticisms from any lips but those of Leonardo, it is possible they would have sunk deeply into his mind.

When at last their prudence whispered that they should be thinking of a retreat, it was with heavy hearts they prepared to leave what had so enchanted them—to come again as soon as possible, what a consoling hope!—and they found themselves at their own fountain with the consciousness that they had done a great deed, though, in truth, their triumph over Donna Placida had been almost forgotten in the solemnity of the visit. From that day forward Leonardo thought more of drawing and painting, and less of mechanics, music, and arithmetic, for all of which he had hitherto evinced strong liking; his heart dwelt in Verocchio's studio, and thither, whenever it was possible, he and Angela resorted, luckily without being

found out. They had no character for mischief, so Aunt Placida slept quietly in her arm-chair, with her bunch of keys suspended at her side, while her guarded sanctum was taken each day by storm. But such a state of things was too prosperous to last, and the day was fast approaching which was to end it.

Leonardo had not been many times in the studio before his ardent spirit prompted him to carry away some of the treasures he admired, and for this purpose he brought his pencil into use, and set to work to copy from the paintings and to make outlines of the sculptured models. In this employment, which necessarily lasted but half an hour at the utmost, the time flew rapidly, and the sketches were mere dashes of the pencil, but still satisfactory to the young artist's eye; each was carefully put into a small portfolio, and afterwards recopied, altered, and improved at leisure, while, with Angela at his elbow, Leonardo discussed their several merits.

It was the beginning of May, the village morning mass was just concluded, and the little

congregation dispersing. Amongst others was Pietro da Vinci, who, on mounting his steed, a stout venerable mule, turned in the direction of Florence, instead of retracing his way homewards. He had business to transact in the flourishing city, and meditated also a visit, for the first time, to the town residence of his neighbour, Andrea Verocchio. That he had an object in going was obvious, for there was not sufficient sympathy between the neighbours to cause them to meet often, and Pietro loved not the arts so much as to care to seek an artist in his studio. But he reverenced his talent, and was now on his way to pay homage to it. Leonardo's treasured portfolio was in his father's hands. One unlucky evening he had left it in the vestibule, and could not find it again when he sought it; he concluded, however, that it had been forgotten at the villa, and that Angela would keep it safely. Pietro had carefully examined the contents of his prize, and already awake to his son's capabilities, although perfectly at a loss how to direct them, or indeed to estimate them correctly, he could not fail to be both struck and amazed at the drawings now before him. Their execution, it

is true, was rough and unfinished, but the subjects were first rate, and as Pietro did not imagine they could be copies, he secretly allowed himself to believe his son a more clever artist than Verocchio himself. At all events, not a day should be lost in showing them to the latter, and, accordingly, Pietro now entered Florence for that purpose.

Verocchio's dwelling in Florence was a great contrast to his villa at F——; there it was all nature, here it was all art; and art blended with splendour, for the painter aimed not only at professional fame, but, like many others, at that which is acquired through magnificence and generosity. Pietro, however, had great reliance upon the contents of the portfolio, and besides assuring himself thereby a certain degree of consideration, the same cause prevented any envious or detracting thought as he mounted the richly inlaid marble staircase. He was ushered through a suite of rooms, in each of which were some of Verocchio's pupils. Here also were Andrea's cotemporaries, Filippo Lippi, Andrea del Castagna, and Antonio del Pollajuolo, which latter, like Verocchio, succeeded even better with the chisel than the brush. Pietro

was not the person to be at his ease in a society of artists, most of them young, and apt to cast severe inquiring glances at an evidently uninited individual; hurrying forward, therefore, he desired to speak with the Maestro.

Verocchio was at that moment painting at a large easel occupying one side of his own studio; some friends were taking their leave, and as he turned to Pietro da Vinci, his countenance was expressive of not a little fatigue and disgust.

"I give you good day, Da Vinci," said he, resuming his occupation, "and a welcome here, for this is the first time you honour me with a visit, Signor."

"True," answered Da Vinci; "but my presence would have been no compliment you know, as Nature has refused me an appreciation of almost everything that men admire, except our blue sky and heavenly sunshine."

"And our Val d'Arno, neighbour," added the painter.

"Eh, well! and our blessed Val d'Arno, perhaps," responded Da Vinci. "But I have come to you for an especial object, and will not waste time on words." With that he brought forward

the portfolio. "See, Maestro, what think you of these scratches?" said he, opening it, and turning over its contents.

Verocchio started.

"Whence comes this?" he exclaimed, taking up a sketch of a Madonna's head from one of his own paintings, which he knew had never yet left his studio at Villa Verocchio. "And this Saint Francis? and the Angel asleep?" continued he, with fresh surprise; "they are all mine! Who has done these? and when have they been seen?"

"Yours!" stammered Pietro; "this is my son's portfolio,—Leonardo's. I had imagined the drawings to be his own!" and, to say the truth, the poor proto-notary fell somewhat from his self-made exaltation.

But Verocchio gazed at the drawings with an intense interest depicted on his countenance; he laid down his brush, and drew a deep breath.

"And these productions are Leonardo's," said he, without taking his eyes off the paper. "How he has seen the originals I cannot tell; but if these be from his own unassisted pencil, your son, Da Vinci, will be great some day."

Pietro resumed his complacency at these

words, but seeing how wrapt in contemplation Verocchio appeared, he remained silent, afraid of making an ill-timed remark.

"Cultivate this genius, Da Vinci," said Verocchio, at length; "long ago you should have discovered it and brought it forth; this is not the growth of a day,—no, nor a year! He has surely shown you earlier attempts?"

"Never, Signor," replied Da Vinci. "These I have found by mere accident, and except once before, I have never seen aught of his doing."

"It is not then for love of praise," said Verocchio; "no, here is genuine feeling, genuine art; the best have been chosen, the best have been copied, and with a boldness which is amazing. Still, how did he gain admittance? Donna Placida is most jealous of authority, and would guard my sanctum as a very Argus. Here is some mystery which we must unravel."

"But, Signor," interposed Da Vinci, "could you not advise me about the youth? I myself have but little knowledge of what you call Art, and ——"

"Leave him to me," said Verocchio; "if he will be my pupil, I will be his master; and who knows, Da Vinci, on which side the honour will

be?" This was said in a light, jesting tone, and yet the acute observer might have traced beneath it the slightest shade of bitterness.

They then parted, after arranging to meet at Villa Verocchio the same evening.

Meanwhile it was a day of misfortunes with Angela and Leonardo; the greatest, of course, was the loss of the portfolio, after which all search had been vain, and both their hearts were oppressed with the fear of some discovery which would lead to their total expulsion from the studio. Then Donna Placida had forbidden Angela any recreation until the completion of a formidable task of tapestry work, and Leonardo was in disgrace from having whispered within hearing that Donna Placida gave Angela her own work to do, because she knew she could not do it as well herself. All three were in no enviable mood; but Placida, belying the softness of her name, relieved herself by scolding at every body and thing within her reach, whereas the two children were condemned to silence. They comforted themselves, however, with the prospect of a visit to the forbidden chamber as

soon as Dame Placida should have commenced her daily siesta. To try their patience, this was later than usual, and even then the gardener, who was training a vine on the house, remained so long within sight of the window to be scaled, that they almost despaired of having any pleasure that day.

At last, however, they effected their purpose, and then, for the first time, Angela's face became radiant as usual, and she ventured even to take a little dance round the apartment, a piece of disrespect towards it never before elicited.

"Might I have left that portfolio here, perhaps?" said Leonardo, as he wandered about. "No, it is decidedly not here, and where in the world can it have gone, Angela?"

"Perhaps Aunt Placida has taken it," replied Angela, who was rather inclined to lay everything disagreeable to Placida's door; "you know she broke your bridge to sticks."

"Ah! I have forgotten my pencil," said Leonardo, whose attention was beginning to be diverted by the rich paintings on all sides; "no pencil or paper have I got. How provoking!" repeated he, "I might have taken the 'Beggar.'"

"Draw on the black board, dear Leone,"

interposed Angela, taking up a piece of white chalk; "that will be better than nothing, though we must rub it all out before we go."

This board was used by Verocchio for anatomical sketches, or for making trial of various positions in the foreshortening of objects; it stood on an easel exactly opposite the entrance door, and was of a large size, hiding much of the apartment on first going in. Its broad black surface was too tempting to withstand, and Leonardo seized the chalk with delight, while Angela felt charmed at her suggestion. But it was a day of misfortunes; Leonardo could not succeed as usual. Sketch after sketch was done, and destroyed as soon by the merciless sponge; he was discouraged.

"I can do nothing to-day, Angela," said he; "your aunt has put me all wrong; her scolding visage alone comes into my mind. But," continued he, as a sudden thought struck him, "see here! I will take it." And seizing the chalk with fresh energy, he quickly traced a large outline in the centre of the board.

"Oh, dear Leone, that is perfect!" exclaimed Angela, clapping her hands with such vehemence that her companion was alarmed.

"Hush, hush, Angela!" said he, looking round; "did you not hear some noise?"

"No, no! dear Leone! Oh, do go on—do!"

Leonardo resumed his sketch. "The pointed chin—there—and those little sharp eyes—so—and the frown, Angela, the frown, it was deep to-day, was it not?—Dash, there it is! Now the mouth—like this—a little larger yet—that is right!—the wrinkles on each side, and the unshapely chin;—not a Madonna's chin, Angela. Stay, it is not altogether fierce enough, think you?—a little fire in the eyes, and extra frown—so! Now, who is it, Angela?" And Leonardo turned triumphantly to his companion.

The question was rather superfluous, as Donna Placida's unattractive countenance shone forth in all its perfection; and Angela was so captivated with the likeness, that she laughed till she cried; and the young artist was decidedly quite satisfied with his performance.

But their pleasure was of a sudden interrupted by the sound of approaching footsteps. Angela looked at Leonardo with evident terror, and Leonardo himself listened in some trepidation.

tion. No time, however, was allowed them to form any scheme of retreat or concealment; two or three persons were evidently at the studio door; and, to render the children's situation yet more appalling, the shrill voice of Donna Placida was now raised in vehement expostulation with some other person.

"I tell you, Andrea," exclaimed she, "that not so much as a midge has gone through these doors besides myself. Santa Maria! do you imagine these keys ever pass into other hands than mine?"

With that a vigorous push was given to the key through the lock. Angela crept in deadly fear behind the great black board, after vainly trying to pull her companion thither also; the bolt revolved, the door opened, and Leonardo, suffused in scarlet blushes, but remaining steadfast to his post by the easel, appeared, to the astonishment of Verocchio, Pietro da Vinci, and last, not least, Donna Placida.

"Witchcraft! the saints defend us!" exclaimed she, as surprise, anger, and confusion were each and all depicted on her face; but Verocchio's and Pietro's eyes were rivetted on

the board, and, in spite of all decorum, they both roared with laughter. Placida luckily had left her spectacles behind her.

"Ah! and you too are here!" screamed the irate matron, dragging Angela forward. "Is this the way you obey your father's orders, creeping through keyholes into forbidden places—for how else did they ever get in?" And she looked round the chamber.

"In the same way we get out, Signora," remarked Leonardo, unable to resist a piece of impudence.

"You young imp of Satan!" shouted Placida, utterly regardless of Pietro's presence; and then becoming speechless from rage, she was obliged to content herself with shaking her fist at the delinquent.

Verocchio in the meanwhile walked to the windows, and immediately detecting the broken bolt, threw open the shutter, and turning to his aunt—"There is the keyhole, Signora," said he, "and a pretty spacious one!" Then going up to Leonardo, who had not moved, he assumed a sterner expression:—"This belongs to you, does it not?" with that he produced the lost portfolio: but Angela thought she traced an

angry glance in her father's eye, and catching hold of his arm—"Oh! father," she exclaimed, "we have never touched any one thing here! Be not displeased with us,—do not be angry! we have done no harm, have we, Leone?"

Donna Placida, however, whose authority was undisputed, caught hold of Angela, saying, "Hold your peace, child! and try to deceive me again if you dare." And in spite of sobs and tears she led away her victim, darting a triumphant glance at Leonardo, who returned an equally sharp one of defiance. But when the door closed, and Leonardo found himself alone with his father and Verocchio, a deep fear of having irremediably offended the latter, not only by presuming to enter the studio, but by daring to copy works which had never yet been exhibited, crept over his heart; so, holding the portfolio in both hands, he did not lift his eyes from off it, for he felt that Verocchio's keen glance was rivetted upon him.

Pietro broke the silence. "A pretty freak this, Sir!" said he, stopping in front of his son; "you may esteem yourself lucky, I think, that the Maestro has not sent you head-foremost out of that same window you have made so free

with!" Here Pietro glanced at the painter, to observe how far he should testify his displeasure; but Verocchio heeded him not, for, with a thoughtful mien, he was steadfastly contemplating Leonardo as if he had never before seen him. Such a demeanour was perfectly unintelligible to the elder Da Vinci, so, turning to his son, he continued: "And now, not a word—not one excuse. Where are your wits, boy? Do you not see you must crave the Maestro's pardon for your indiscretion?—and you will be fortunate indeed if you get it!"

Leonardo's lip quivered, but he neither spoke nor moved. Pietro's ever hasty temper was ruffled, for he feared that his son's obstinacy might repel the rising favour of Verocchio.

"Boy!" he exclaimed, "do not push your stubbornness too far, or you shall bitterly repent it!"

A reply somewhat in the same spirit hovered on Leonardo's lip, but it was arrested.

"Tush," said Verocchio, advancing, and laying a heavy hand on the boy's shoulder; "never fear, neighbour, but that Leonardo and I can patch up this business. Come, I am not angry, though to be sure I might have stormed a little but for

that," pointing to the portfolio. "As it is," continued he, while his cheering voice caused Leonardo to cast up a half-confident, half-diffident look, "as it is, your time is henceforth mine, and I have other studios for you than this. Out yonder," said he, pointing in the direction of Florence, through the open window, "out there, in our gay city."

The large dark eyes of Leonardo were fixed in mingled doubt and astonishment upon Verocchio; his heart palpitated with violence; he seemed to wait for life in the next words of the painter.

Verocchio seemed to enjoy his suspense, but at last he said, "Is it necessary for me to ask you whether or not you will be my pupil?"

"Your pupil, Maestro!" exclaimed Leonardo, his whole being electrified with delight; "necessary to *ask* me! Oh, Signor! you cannot be in earnest!"

"Be ready to-morrow morning, and you will see," replied Verocchio.

Leonardo remained one instant with the whole energy of his mind depicted on his countenance as he gazed upon the painter; then quickly seized his hand, pressed it convulsively, and rushed out of the studio.

CHAP. III.

ON the following morning there was a group at the entrance of Verocchio's dwelling, evidently assembled to witness the departure of the painter and Leonardo. Verocchio's stout horse had been conducted to the door, where it testified its expectation of seeing its master by sundry subdued neighings, and by pawing the ground. Near this noble animal stood, in an humble posture, Pietro da Vinci's mule, destined to convey his son the first step of his career.

Leonardo was leaning against the saddle, ready to spring into it when Verocchio should make his appearance, and meantime whispering all the affectionate consolation he could think of to Angela, who was on the other side, half concealed by the huge saddle, and ineffectually attempting not to cry. It was, indeed, the saddest morning she had ever experienced, since suddenly, without any previous intimation, her only companion, the sole creature with whom

she felt sympathy, was leaving her, and she knew not when she would see him again. In her childish grief she pictured to herself that Leone would perhaps never come back; she had heard of people who went to foreign countries, over the seas, and never returned. In this fear she was strengthened by her aunt openly expressing her satisfaction at being rid of that impudent Da Vinci, following up her joy with the fervent hope that he would meet with his due, and be effectually prevented from showing his face there again.

It was, therefore, in vain that the sun shone brilliantly, and that the birds sang among the trees, or dabbled themselves gaily in the water of the fountains; Angela heeded nothing but that the minutes were fast bringing the dreaded moment when Leonardo was to go away.

“Come back soon, dear Leone, will you?” she repeated, holding her companion’s hand tightly in her own, as if by that means she could prevent his going at all; “how dull I shall be without you!”

“It is a long way to Florence, you know, Angela, too far to walk,” answered Leonardo; “but I must come and see you; I will in some

way or other, and till then you must keep our garden watered; and our little cedar tree, you will not forget that either?"

"I shall not like to go in the garden when you are not there, Leone," sobbed the child, "and I cannot lift the large watering-pot alone, you know."

"Hush, Angela, you must not cry so," interposed Leonardo, "you will frighten old Pio," and he caressed the long ears of his steed. "Wipe away your tears! — there," he continued, "your aunt will say that I have been causing them, and what will the Maestro say to me?" Then, to distract his dear little Angela's thoughts, he lifted her into the saddle, and with one arm holding her in safety, he coaxed Pio into a slow walk along the path. Angela smiled through her tears at the novelty of her position, which seemed to prolong the coming of the dreaded moment; but, like an April sunshine, that sweet expression was but the fore-runner of another shower, for before they had reached the end of the terrace, voices from the villa recalled them to the door, and announced to both that the time of separation was come.

Angela slipped down from her seat, and with

almost a bursting heart followed Leonardo up to the door, where Verocchio was standing ready to mount. He looked at his little daughter as if expecting to see the tears which, in truth, were chasing each other down her cheeks ; he then drew her towards him and kissed her, and springing upon his horse, signed to Leonardo to follow him. The youth had already mounted, but before encouraging his mule to proceed, he lingered one moment. Angela flew to his side ; there was a short embrace, and as each pronounced the word “Addio !” Leonardo restrained the animal no longer, and it soon carried him up to the side of Verocchio.

The favourable impression made on the boy by Verocchio’s conduct of the preceding evening, was rapidly becoming effaced from his memory by the cold and distant manner now assumed by the Maestro ; he rode on therefore silently, pondering upon the many changes twelve short hours had brought about, and switching away the flies with an air of unconcern which he was far from feeling, for Angela’s tearful countenance cast a shade over his hopes. Verocchio, on his side, preserved a stately and silent dignity, such as was his de-

meanour to all his pupils ; but still at favourable moments he threw observant glances at his companion, as if wishing to find out the subject of his thoughts.

In this manner they travelled the three leagues which led to the city.

Leonardo's heart beat more quickly as he approached his destination, and he gently pressed his hand upon a small leathern bag suspended from his shoulder ;—it contained his precious portfolio.

The flowery faubourgs of Florence were now passed, and they entered the city, where markets and churches alike called forth the population to the streets ; but clear and rich above all other bells came that of the cathedral's campanile, in view of which the travellers had now arrived.

“Look up, Da Vinci !” exclaimed Verocchio, for the first time breaking silence, “look up at the triumphal monument of your countryman, and see what Art can do.”

“Ay, Signor,” replied Leonardo, after gazing up at the tower for a few moments, “but the genius was that of a shepherd boy.”

“Which would have ever been smothered in

the wool-bags had not the hand of Art raised it from the dust," added Verocchio, ironically. "Think you that without Cimabue, Giotto had ever designed or built yonder Campanile? — Tush!"

Leonardo was silent, but some warm feeling had flushed his cheek. Silence was renewed until they dismounted at the foot of Verocchio's staircase.

"Now, young sir," said Verocchio to his pupil, as they ascended the steps, "this is not Villa Verocchio; you will have no name here until you have made yourself one, which will not be accomplished by tricks. You have some talent, but so have all my pupils; until you have proved yourself as good as they, I can do nothing for you." As he spoke he pushed open the massive entrance door, and passing through a vestibule, in which were several persons awaiting his arrival, he entered the chamber allotted to the least advanced of his pupils.

Great was the tumult of getting in order among the young students upon the appearance of the Maestro; the laughing and chattering made way for silence, and the bright joking eyes now eagerly followed and watched the

movements of him whose least word carried honour or disgrace. But the restraint did not last long, for Verocchio, after pointing out an empty easel, as the place his new pupil might appropriate to himself, passed out by another door, leaving Leonardo to make acquaintance with his new companions.

Da Vinci had enjoyed but little of the society of boys heretofore, and he now felt a thrill of pleasure at finding himself amongst so many of his own age and sex, who were all pursuing the occupation he most loved. Still it was with a certain timidity he advanced to look at the performance of a youth who was copying from a plaster cast. Two or three of those near him looked up with scrutinising curiosity, and the boy in question turned round with ironical politeness, and inquired, "Does my poor handiwork find favour?"

"So, so," answered Leonardo in the same tone, and turned to the next, while a general laugh made him colour he knew not why. "Bravo, Maestro! bravo!" cried several idle-looking artists, "try again!" While, to distract his attention, or perhaps to try the temper of the new pupil, pellets of bread or paper came

flying over easels at their devoted victim, as also pencils, chalk, or anything within reach, all which he received with great coolness, either sending the missiles back, or taking no notice of their presence. He was, however, soon entirely absorbed in watching the proceedings of the industrious, so much so, that he did not observe any person had entered the studio, until a heavy hand upon his shoulder made him look up. "Yonder, if you please," said a tall, thin man, with grizzled hair, as he pointed to the empty easel; "that is your place, keep to it!"

Leonardo obeyed, while he looked with awe upon the new comer, who was no less a person than Basilio, master of the studio, under Verrocchio's direction. This personage proceeded to each pupil in turn, slowly criticising or approving, and indulging himself with a pinch of snuff from time to time. Leonardo felt impatient at observing that he was the very last of all, but he consoled himself with the flattering hope that he should not remain so long. Basilio stood presently before him.

"Da Vinci is your surname," said he, tapping on the spacious snuff-box, and eyeing the future artist, as if to sound the depth of his genius;

"you have, I think, some sketches, some attempts to show me, if I understood the Maestro rightly,—eh?"

Leonardo withdrew the portfolio from his bag with trembling hands, and gave it to Basilio, but without looking up, for he feared some ironical smiles from those around him.

Basilio was one of those in whom Nature, while refusing great powers, had yet implanted a deep love for human genius and the beautiful. Hidden under an outward austerity were some of the warmest feelings of our nature, and although disappointed of attaining in his loved art the perfection he so much reverenced, yet his temper had not been soured, nor had he been so disgusted as to give up his profession; he still lived in Art, and basked in the sunshine of genius, worshipping at a distance that which it was impossible for him to approach, and smiling in his old age over the ruined fragments of the ambition of his youth.

His penetrating eye soon detected the cause of Leonardo's trepidation; he remembered all those sanguine emotions in his own breast, had seen them in many others, and still felt the sting of disappointment they had entailed.

"Poor boy," thought Basilio, "he too is beginning; better no gifts than a few!" With these thoughts he took the portfolio; but no sooner had he opened it, than he walked precipitately to a window, in the embrasure of which he was hidden from Leonardo and the other youths. There he remained much longer than was needed to look at the drawings, and when at last he again appeared, his eyes were red, as if a little weakness had assailed him. The portfolio was evidently thrust into his pocket, but he made no remark upon its contents, and merely directing Leonardo to set to work in copying from the same model as his neighbour, he went to the opposite end of the studio and remained there.

The time passed quickly to Leonardo, for his whole heart was bent upon his employment, and the hours fled unheeded by. About the middle of the day an hour was devoted to relaxation, and little stores of bread and fruit were withdrawn from their owner's baskets. The new pupil had brought nothing, but his wants were soon supplied by his neighbours, and Basilio vouchsafed him a piece of his own cheese. Many then slept, or dozed lazily upon the floor, while others made the circuit of the studio, ex-

amining the progress of their companions, and comparing their proficiency with their own. Leonardo was one of these, and the attention he bestowed upon each performance had been worthy of better objects. Basilio, who generally indulged in a mid-day nap, was on this occasion unusually wakeful, and with his eyes half shut, as he leaned back in the only arm-chair present, he followed his new pupil's movements with a degree of interest which no one would have supposed. He smiled, too, on perceiving that when the round was completed, Leonardo seemed impatient of his inaction, and noiselessly recommenced his task, having first considered attentively the drawing of his companion, upon whose easel was scribbled in white chalk, "Lorenzo di Crede." The name of each student appeared on his easel in this way, and Leonardo heaved a sigh as he looked upon his own, which as yet was nameless.

The day wore on, and Basilio commenced his last rounds in expectation of Verocchio's daily visit. The clear sound of the Campanile's bell at last announced the hour of five, at which signal one of the pupils rose and threw open the folding doors through which Verocchio had dis-

appeared that morning. What a glorious vista was that to Leonardo ! He saw in perspective five or six studios opening one into the other, and forming one long gallery, wherein were gorgeous colours, and half finished paintings, which he longed to examine more closely. But every eye seemed more intent, and every hand more careful at that moment, than he had as yet seen them, and this was easily explained by Verocchio and several personages becoming visible at the extremity of the apartments. Basilio joined them, and they proceeded together to each expectant group. But Leonardo had caught sight of their artistical countenances, on which was depicted all the criticism they were about to exercise, and his heart fell on turning his eyes back to his own work. He had had no encouragement the whole day, and he now panted for it.

Full an hour was passed thus, for there were many pupils in the adjoining studios, and the judges easily fell into dissertations while criticising. Leonardo kept quiet behind his easal, and only once peeped out; when he did, he happened to glance at the face of a youth in the adjoining chamber, on which disappointment,

mortification, and grief were so vividly expressed, that Leonardo was struck with terror ; it had not occurred to him that such feelings could be the portion of any who had once passed the ordeal of a beginning. This painful discovery would have disquieted him more, had not Verrocchio and his train entered at the moment, and concentrated his whole attention.

Basilio was now in his particular province, and his interest in his pupils was such, that while watching the Maestro's eye, he found no time for a single pinch of snuff, though the box was rapped continually.

"Bravo, my little Antonio ; you have found the road to fame, eh ?—only where does that hand point to —up or down?—and what is that blotch of shade, just in the eye of the light ? It was surely in your own, eh ? Ha, Pietro, that is a step. I shall soon lose you ; but you have many before you, so pocket your vanity. Oh, oh, what is this ?" continued Basilio, turning to a third, "is that correct, think you, Giuseppe ?— and what claws of fingers ! they remind me in truth of a cat's paw. What say you ? Try again,— never despair ! I know you can do better. What, Lorenzo, already finished ?—too quick, too quick !

See, the copy is too small; a hasty thing will ever be a bad one!"

Thus talked Basilio; but Verocchio was more reserved, and was held in much greater awe. "Good! very good!" or "Bad! indifferent!" were all the remarks he generally bestowed upon the productions of this studio. But this line of conduct, while openly treating the boyish attempts as almost beneath his notice, carried yet a strong incentive along with it, for all were anxious to advance, in order to rise to the level of his criticism.

At last Verocchio, whose countenance expressed a certain degree of weariness, looked round as if remembering something, and laying his hand upon the arm of his friend Pollajuolo, "Where is Da Vinci?" he exclaimed; "I see him not, Basilio."

"Here, Maestro," said Leonardo, stepping from behind his easel, but hardly daring to confront the two maestri.

"Ha, well; how have you used your day?" said Verocchio, moving towards the corner where stood the easel. "Withdraw your board, Lorenzo. I will have no comparisons," continued he, to the young Di Crede.

The boy obeyed with a good grace, for all knew Verocchio's partiality, or rather interest, for new comers. Verocchio, Pollajuolo, and Basilio now stood before Leonardo's first acknowledged essay; it was the outline of a Jupiter's head. Leonardo had his eyes fixed on the ground, or he might have seen Verocchio's quick glance from the drawing to Pollajuolo, bespeaking more interest than he had as yet evinced at all in the studio; he might have seen a responding expression of surprise pass over Pollajuolo's countenance, and he might have beheld Basilio directing a deep, unconscious, but almost sorrowful gaze of admiration at his pupil's work. Verocchio was silent; Leonardo thought those few moments hours; he could almost hear the beatings of his heart. At last Verocchio took the drawing slowly from its place, picked up a piece of white chalk, and giving it to Leonardo, "Write your name," said he, "upon your easel." Then, without speaking further, he left the room with Pollajuolo and Basilio, carrying off the drawing, to Leonardo's astonishment and regret, until his clustering companions had informed him that it implied the highest praise the Maestro could bestow.

The studio was now a scene of disorder and confusion, such as daily recurred at the dispersing hour ; a seeking for caps and coats, a bundling up of studio apparel, a pushing about of stools and easels, a talking and laughing, and perhaps a little quarrelling, all formed no small contrast to the hushed demeanour of the students an hour previously. But Leonardo did not enter into the spirit of the bustle, partly because he did not yet know whither he was to go, and partly because there was an unpleasant feeling of uncertainty in his mind as to what the Maestro really thought of him. Nor was he sufficiently experienced amongst his new comrades to be certain whether they were making him their laughing stock or not, and he was not sorry to perceive that he should be very soon left alone. He supposed rightly that some arrangement had been made by his father and the Maestro for his lodging in Florence, and, having received no orders to the contrary, he remained in the studio in expectation of seeing some one or other.

The evening shadows were creeping in rich warmth over the surrounding buildings, but the air seemed heavy in comparison with the fresh

mountain breeze Leonardo had enjoyed since his infancy ; his thoughts wandered away to F—— ; he pictured to himself the lovely walk Angela would have at sunset, and began to imagine how unutterably delightful their next meeting would be—the first meeting after their first separation—when, for the second time that day, the voice of Basilio made him start.

“ Come, young maestro,” said he, “ I am to find you a lodging before supper, so we must away ; I know a good woman who will let you a room—ay, and who has an eye, too, for a picture ; her son paints because he is too good-natured for any one to tell him he cannot ; but lost time — lost time ! ” And Basilio sighed as he shut up his snuff-box.

CHAP. IV.

LEONARDO was established in the small but comfortable house of old Monica Monzi, a ten minutes' walk from Verocchio's residence, and opposite the small apartment tenanted by Basilio. The latter was happy at having located his pupil so near his own abode ; he began to feel an interest in him for which he could not account ; there was a charm about the boy. So Basilio resolved to keep him from harm if possible, and to direct the young talent which he saw bursting forth.

Leonardo felt a childish joy in looking round his little chamber, and considering that he had begun his active life ; and that all future honour, greatness, and happiness, were dependent upon his own hand and powers, his own unaided skill. He would have wished for nothing more, could he have known his dear Angela to be near, encouraging his efforts, and echoing his hopes.

The days flew rapidly ; the earliest pupil at Verocchio's door, and the latest to leave it, was

the indefatigable Leonardo ; in leisure hours, he was the popular, spirited boy, ready for mischief, and impatient of contradiction ; but, recreation over, his whole being was centred in his study. His criticisms soon held weight, and the most overbearing of the young artists gave way before him upon points of critical opinion. For criticism was the most favourite occupation in the studio, and the boy-artists assiduously imitated their revered masters in that branch of their profession. Often was Basilio's command reiterated in the course of the day, that silence should be observed.

Our young artist, in common with several of his companions, had permission every evening to visit all the other studios, that of Verocchio included, as also the chambers devoted to sculpture on the basement of the building. None availed themselves of this so often as Leonardo ; many times he was alone, or with Basilio only. One evening they were thus examining a newly finished painting of Verocchio, destined to decorate some hall in the Medici Palace. It was an elaborate performance, exhibiting great vigour of design, but wanting in grace or softness of execution. Basilio ex-

tolled its merits without feeling its deficiencies ; but Leonardo ventured to ask if he did not think the Maestro's work lacked something, he knew not what, but perhaps Basilio could tell.

Basilio looked at his presumptuous pupil, and then at the painting, and again from one to the other. "What an eagle's flight the boy will take, if already he criticise the best living masters !" was his thought, as he pretended to examine the picture more narrowly.

"I have it !" cried Leonardo, retiring a few paces ; "it is harsh, Basilio ; it lacks softness."

"*You* think so ! You think your critical eyes are worth more than those of the maestri who have extolled this work ! Come, my little cock, we must have no such crowing !" exclaimed Basilio, whose very bones trembled with surprise at such audacity.

"Well, so be it," replied Leonardo, amused at the shock he had given Basilio's feelings ; "what *I* say cannot signify much ; let us go below."

Basilio followed ; but on casting a last look on Verocchio's work, the shadow of a feeling crept over his mind that young Da Vinci might perchance have spoken the truth.

They then entered the hall in which were Verocchio's *chef's-d'œuvre* of sculpture. His chisel and brush had raised him high in favour with the Medici, then at the zenith of their power, although the venerable Cosmo was tottering on the verge of the grave. The Florentine artists were invariably invited to the splendid palaces of the Medici, whose appreciation equalled their love of art, and amongst the first who basked in this sunshine of encouragement was Andrea Verocchio. Cosmo loved the energy of his spirit, whether depicted in marble or upon canvas, although he had often openly avowed his preference for the former from Verocchio's hand. This was a sore point with the painter: his genius inclined to sculpture; but his taste, to painting. Even from Cosmo de' Medici he did not easily brook any praise of his chisel at the expense of his brush.

On the evening above mentioned, when Basilio entered the hall, it contained but very few works, several having been moved away the same day; the only one completed was the figure of a young infant asleep, lying on a bed of roses; these were most beautifully

executed, though of course a minor part of the whole considered as a work of art. The child's countenance exhibited a heavenly expression ; it appeared in a deep slumber, but still so calm and smiling, that the beholder was led to believe it rather the sleep of an infant-angel than of a mortal child.

Leonardo could not withdraw his eyes from it; he had once seen Angela asleep a long while previously, and he remembered her beautiful smile, and how he had stood admiring it, scarcely daring to move lest he should awake her.

"Come now, young critic," exclaimed Basilio, "you do not find fault. That ugly harsh contour, and vacant baby-face, you do not criticise them. I wonder at your judgment."

"No," answered Leonardo slyly, "I see how one must set about criticising ; only listen first to what some maestro says, and then repeat it ! Is it not so ? But I can see what Maestro Basilio thinks of this, so we agree. How delicately are those eyelids dropped !—and the angelic expression of the little mouth, how beautiful ! "

"Ay," replied Basilio, "and the original was as lovely as this. Poor lady ! "

“Ah!” inquired Leonardo, “is the child then dead?”

“Ay, it is indeed dead,” answered Basilio; “and had you been in Florence on that day, you would still hear the tolling of the bells; for it was Cosmo’s grandchild!”

“What! Giovanni de’ Medici’s only child?” asked Da Vinci.

“Ay,” answered Basilio, “Giovanni and his son have both been taken”—here he crossed himself; “and they say Cosmo has been sore stricken by the blow. But he is an old man, he will not sorrow long; the widowed mother, I feel for her most, the beautiful Cornelia di Alessandri; she has a hard lot.”

“And is this for her?” asked Leonardo, pointing to the sculpture.

“Yes, for her,” replied Basilio; “she has many times been here to view its progress, and I have seen her gaze at it till her tears have dropped upon the cold little face, and then she would go away precipitately. Poor lady!”

“Poor lady!” echoed Da Vinci; “and happy Verocchio to have done this!”

Five weeks passed in much the way we have described, and already the young artist had made

great progress in his profession ; indeed, Verocchio could not but allow that his pupil had advanced as much as others usually did in three months. His interest never flagged, nor was he discouraged at the vast difficulties which the study of anatomy opened before him. Already were the walls of his little room decorated with designs and drawings, all executed in the spare moments he could call his own, while in the most honourable place hung a sketch of Angela. This was the object of good Monica's admiration, and Leonardo liked the old woman for liking it. Angela formed part of all his thoughts, whatsoever they were ; he embodied her so entirely in his mind, that it was seldom he felt her actual absence. But at the end of six weeks this state of things began to alter, and Leonardo determined to pay a visit to Villa Verrocchio without asking permission, for somehow he entertained a secret fear that it might not be granted.

His father was from home, so that there was no excuse for going to F—— at that particular time. It was no small undertaking to traverse the intervening distance under the sun of Tuscany, and there were no conveyances

within Da Vinci's reach, except, perhaps, the little open basket-carts in which the peasants came to market. But the delight of again seeing Angela, made all obstacles appear surmountable, and he eagerly sought an opportunity for carrying his plan into execution. At one time he thought of confiding his intention to his good friend Basilio ; but, on consideration, he deemed it wise to keep his own counsel.

It was, therefore, with secret anxiety, that he looked forward to the fête of Saint Mary Magdalene, a day upon which he thought it likely he could make his temporary escape.

From Basilio he soon learnt that Verocchio was to be present at a supper given by Piero de' Medici, on the evening of the day in question ; this was good news, but he was somewhat puzzled by Basilio proposing a long walk by the banks of the Arno for that very afternoon. Leonardo stammered out an excuse, became very red, but at last taking courage, replied that he could not go with him because he was going somewhere else.

They were in Da Vinci's room ; Basilio was rather hurt, as he could not conceive that Leo-

nardo had any friend in Florence but himself; the feeling was shown in his countenance, and Leonardo was sorry.

"Look you, Maestro," said he, "I am going to see her," pointing to the sketch of Angela.

"Is that then a portrait?" demanded Basilio; "I had imagined it to be some figure of your fancy. Ah, well; never mind! Do as you wish, you have not often a holiday."

Basilio had never seen Verocchio's daughter, and the time was gone when he would have cared to ask who the maiden was that his pupil sought, so Leonardo prepared his plans, and found to his great joy that the difficulties vanished as the day drew near. On the morning of the fête he was awake before ever one of the hundred church bells had tolled, and once up, he awaited the time impatiently when he should set forth on his journey.

Poor Angela had never spent six such long weeks as those following her companion's departure; and indeed it was a heavy trial for a child. She had been evidently miserable for one whole fortnight, falling asleep each night in

tears, and awaking every morning to renew them. Her aunt at last formally laid the matter before Verocchio, who, calling his timid child, made her perceive the necessity of not allowing her tears to be seen; nothing but the fear of her father could have enabled her to swallow her sorrow, but his cold severe tone had great power over her; she feared one word from Verocchio more than whole hours of her aunt's scolding. So there were no more tears or red eyes, and both the elders congratulated themselves on having put an end to the foolish attachment of the two children.

But Angela was not happy, though her little sorrow was of such unsubstantial kind, that had any body sympathised with her, her former smiles and gaiety would have naturally returned, and with them courage to bear with the absence of Leonardo. As it was, all her thoughts were sorrowfully directed to Florence.

On the fête day to which we have before alluded, she was left entirely to herself; her aunt was unwell, and kept her room; the servants, with one exception, had gone to spend the holiday elsewhere; all was silent in the place. Angela sat a long time upon a wall which

they sat down on a mossy bank at the extremity of the garden.

"Oh, never mind, dear Leone," answered Angela, smiling sadly in spite of herself; "tell me all about Florence; is it not a very great and beautiful city?"

But Leonardo was not to be thus led away; he saw Angela had been sad, and his own tale was forgotten. He coaxed and questioned, in short, so soothingly, that it was not long before Angela had confided all the little heavinesses of her heart, and the fear in which she more than ever stood of her father. Young Da Vinci felt his blood grow warm at the description of Verocchio's anger, and at the command he had given relating to the tears; he felt also an anxious fear that Angela's affection for him might be assailed, that Verocchio disliked the attachment which had grown up between them. But Angela was now comparatively quite happy; her mind was unburdened of its distress; she had her dear Leone with her, who was comforting and caressing her, what could she wish for more?

Leonardo then began recounting all he had

seen; first there was the description of Verocchio's house and all the studios; then that of his companions and Basilio; then his own little room and all its contents, not forgetting Angela's picture opposite the window, nor the sweet flowers in the sill given him by kind old Monica; and again, how he had wandered through the churches and cathedral, where in each there was so much to look at (he had not yet visited all), and how he was always wishing for the day when Angela could be also with him to enjoy such beautiful things. Then he described to her Verocchio's perfect little statue of Cornelia de' Medici's child, lying upon the roses, at which Angela was quite enchanted, and repeatedly exclaimed, "How soft and how sweet for the bambino!" And at last Leonardo confided to her that the great maestri, Verocchio included, had praised him. This good news was of the most comforting kind; for the child Angela could not but imagine that her father was changing towards Leone, if he could thus praise him. She had yet to learn that the praise of skill has little in common with kindly feelings.

Lightly flew the happy moments of this

meeting; time had never seemed so swift. After the two friends had spoken their pent-up thoughts, and revelled in that sympathy they both had so much missed, neither of them dared to face what each felt to be near,—the hour of parting. A looker-on might have traced, perhaps, on their countenances a lingering fear, but neither expressed it in words. Leonardo had brought his sketch-book to show Angela, and in poring over the pages with her, he strove to forget how shortly his joy would end. Angela, on her part, totally taken up, first with her unexpected meeting, and now with the engrossing idea of its coming to a close, completely forgot that her aunt would be waiting for the seven o'clock supper. All was forgotten, she had been so happy.

The chime of the church now slowly pealed forth eight. Leonardo started up. "Now, dear Angela, I must go; give me a kiss, and do not cry," for Angela remained sitting with one hand over her face. At that moment a rustling near them caused both to look round; nothing was visible; they listened, but heard nothing. "It was a bird," said Da Vinci.

"No, it may have been my aunt," said

Angela, while she became so pale and again so flushed, that it was not difficult to perceive she dreaded the discovery of Leonardo's presence, remembering Donna Placida's late quarrel with him. This feeling was, indeed, so strong as to overbalance that of sorrow at parting with Leonardo, for with a look around she kissed him; and then seemed impatient for him to go. It was all the work of an instant; with one long embrace Leonardo bade her adieu, and springing over a low wall, he entered an adjoining path, and was soon out of sight. Angela watched him depart, and then, with a dim sense of loneliness weighing on her heart, returned towards the house.

Meanwhile Leonardo walked leisurely on the road back, trusting to chance for the help of a conveyance, and caring but little whether one appeared, for in any case he should arrive too soon. Far different had it been that morning, when in the old farmer's car Leonardo had counted every inch of every mile. He had seen Angela, had tasted once more the sympathy of affection; the parting had been bitter it is true, but they had been so happy together. He felt new vigour, fresh courage to set again

to work in building his fame and fortune. It would all be well if Angela were happy; but how was it possible for her to be so? This thought spread a gloom over his own prospects; his own success was unavailing to her.

He was so deeply engrossed in these various reflections, that he did not hear the noise of a sort of char-à-banc behind him; it contained but the driver, and he readily allowed Da Vinci a seat. They proceeded in silence, until, approaching the city, Leonardo observed a villa from whose windows light was streaming, evidently upon some grand fête within. Pointing it out, he inquired of his companion to whom it belonged. "To the Signor Piero de' Medici," answered he. Leonardo unconsciously pulled his cap rather lower over his brow. They soon afterwards stopped, and Leonardo pursued his way on foot. He now bethought him that in his ecstasies of the morning, he had utterly neglected to attend mass; a feeling of gratitude was now blended with the sense of duty, and he determined to enter the first church he should find at that hour open.

It chanced to be that of Santa Croce, whither

he already had often gone, both to attend the service, and to wonder at and admire the frescoes of Giotto. Now there reigned a solemn stillness in the majestic building which added much to the sacredness of the spot. A few lamps alone combated the darkness of the hour, for although many candles had that day been devoted to each altar, the last had been some time extinguished. In like manner but a small number of the pious crowd who at all hours had thronged the church, now remained in it; here and there the glimmering of one little taper showed that its owner was still at his devotions, but these lights were few and far between.

Leonardo walked gently towards the principal altar, stopping here and there, however, to gaze at the various paintings upon which the lamps threw light; here it was a Crucifixion by Fra Angelico, there a Magdalen of Masaccio; yonder again, a more ancient, but no less striking picture; a Madonna of Cimabue. Da Vinci then moved on to the extremity of the church. On rising from the humble posture in which he remained during his devotions, the thought crossed his mind that his good friend Monica would be impatient at the lateness of

his return, so he quickened his step, intending, however, to have a peep into the chapels on the opposite side of the building.

But his progress was arrested before he had gone far, by his perceiving a female figure kneeling before his favourite Madonna. She was clad entirely in black, and her veil, thrown negligently on one shoulder, discovered a countenance of such perfect beauty, that Leonardo's eyes were instantly rivetted in wondering admiration. It was as if a vague shadow of beauty, which long had floated in our young artist's imagination, had suddenly found life, and overwhelmed with its superiority all his powers of adoration. He retreated a step or two into the deep gloom thrown around by a massive pillar, and leaning against it gazed on that beautiful face with feelings which none but true artist can experience.

It was, indeed, a countenance well worthy of admiration, but the charm it possessed was owing also not a little to an expression of profound melancholy. Each chiselled feature bore the stamp of sadness, and yet it was mingled with such evident resignation, such hallowed calmness, that it spoke more of hope than

despair. Leonardo marked this expression, and he felt almost a holy influence on beholding the earnestness of the suppliant, and her bright soft eyes become dimmed by tears; he saw nothing but that uplifted countenance illumined by the lamp above, and exhibiting such an exquisite expression. The stillness of the hour, the surrounding darkness, all excited the poetry of Leonardo's soul; a dreamy sense of enjoyment crept over him, in which he would have long revelled had the cause of it continued. But in a few minutes the lady rose, and turning slowly round prepared to depart; at the same moment a youth, verging towards manhood, and bearing all the outward insignia of republican nobility, advanced from a corner, in the darkness of which he had escaped observation.

"Ah, Renzo, is it thou?" softly exclaimed the lady; "I had not expected thee in truth, and thy father will be missing thee at the banquet."

"Said I not I should be here to escort you back?" answered the youth, kissing the hand that was proffered him; "think of the hour; would you go alone?"

"Do they not all know *me*, Renzo?" re-

turned the sweet thrilling voice of the lady, while she adjusted her veil and mantle. "Believe me," she continued, "none would harm me." Her voice became inaudible as they moved away, but Leonardo could not restrain himself from following them; that pure-toned voice seemed to call him on. He walked softly forwards, and stopped on perceiving they had done so; it was now almost totally dark, and Leonardo was thus enabled to approach them more nearly. The lady was speaking in a hurried, anxious tone.

"Dear Renzo, it is gone, it is gone!—*His* gift!—I have lost the miniature."

The youth urged something in a consoling tone.

"Think you so?" answered his companion, doubtfully; "may you be right, may you be right! Must I also be robbed of that only relic?"

Here Leonardo was obliged to move rapidly away to escape observation, for the lady suddenly returned to the chapel in which he had first beheld her kneeling; but she evidently sought the lost object in vain. Da Vinci presently saw her slowly prepare to depart, and as she

passed near the pillar behind which he had concealed himself, she said to her youthful companion, "Ah, Renzo, my mind misgives me; it is lost—lost!"

A few minutes afterwards she had left the church with her cavalier, the roll of a heavy carriage was heard, and then all was still.

Da Vinci again bethought him of the lateness of the hour, and now prepared to leave; to effect this he had to pass the great altar, in front of which the rich carpet was still remaining from the ceremonies of the morning. Da Vinci made a genuflexion when near it, but in so doing he trod upon some hard substance, and looking down perceived a small oval miniature attached to a gold chain lying at his feet. Picking it up, it appeared to emit a flash of fire as he turned it round, and this was accounted for by a double circlet of diamonds which surrounded a highly finished miniature. "What is this?" thought Leonardo, as he examined his prize; "this is indeed something to pick up. A handsome man too, that, and right well painted, though perhaps the shade is somewhat heavy; and a good chain of Genoa workmanship. Ha, it is broken, I see, quite worn through, and thus

The latter proceeded in a manner which afforded to Basilio and Verocchio more satisfaction than to Leonardo himself. He was impatient at the awkwardness of his hand, which could not act up to the correctness of his eye; and aiming in mind at a perfection unknown to his masters, he contemplated his present works with a sincere contempt. "Good, very good," Verocchio would say to him, "for the time you have studied; persevere only." And while the pupil's cheek grew red at the qualification, his inmost soul was filled with bitterness that he could not as yet execute the glorious imagery which his invention continually presented to him; and long after the studio was empty, and all but Basilio had eagerly sought freedom, he would still be found gazing at the work on his easel.

"Maestro," he would exclaim, "Verocchio has called this good, *considering all things*; with such praise as I call none, he thinks to encourage!" Then, seizing the board, he would strip off the paper and tear it to atoms, while Basilio, with a half smile on his countenance, stood viewing the work of destruction.

"My son," he would say, "what is it you

would do? All things have a beginning, and you cannot reach perfection in a day!"

"Will you promise it me in a life?" exclaimed Leonardo, collecting the fragments of his drawing.

"*Perfection* — perhaps not," answered Basilio, smiling again sadly; "but genius can go far, and, my son, you possess some."

"Ay, there *is* something here," returned Leonardo, pressing his hand to his forehead, "I know not what; but how is a world of thought to be of use when the hand will not obey, and produces such a thing as this was? Every single effort falls short of the intention, and when completed it seems to be but a taunt upon the talent that can do no better. Each day I would destroy my work before it is subjected to humiliating praise!"

"Ah," returned Basilio, "you must moderate your desires, and clip the wings of your imagination for a while, else you will find it soar too high presently. Yet do not be discouraged," he continued, patting his pupil's shoulder; "believe me, Verocchio thinks more highly of both hand and head than he cares to tell you; he is a man of few words, and one of

these days when you are in yonder," pointing to the adjoining studio, "it will be without his giving you any reason for the change; ay, and I shall be sorry to lose you, Leonardo."

The young artist pressed his master's hand for all answer. On the following day Leonardo was occupied in Verocchio's studio preparing the Maestro's colours, a task assigned to each junior pupil on successive days, and a favourite one with all, as they had the enjoyment of seeing their master at his easel, and were able to watch his progress, while at the same time they became skilled in the preparation of the materials he used. There was a cloud on the boy's brow as he set to work; the Maestro was expected from his villa; a sort of presentiment hung over Leonardo's mind that his own visit on the fête-day would be known, and that Angela would suffer for it in some way or other. While he was cogitating over this, the door flew open, and Verocchio entered. Contrary to his pupil's expectations, his countenance wore a more agreeable expression than usual; he looked as if he had overcome some difficulty which had opposed him. On perceiving his young assistant he eyed him with something like sarcastic

pleasure, which was quite unseen by its object, busied as he was.

After doffing his out-door dress, Verocchio commenced his operations, not without some display of confidence in his own powers, and satisfaction at the result of his labours. Leonardo carried the colours to their usual place, disposed the palette and brushes, and was about to continue grinding as before, when Verocchio stopped him with—"And so you were at F--- on the fête-day?"

Leonardo's foible was a blush, and now he became perfectly crimson. "Yes, Signor," was all he could say. But the Maestro apparently hastened to relieve his embarrassment, for smiling, he continued:—"And you saw Angela, and my aunt saw you. From the way in which she mentioned your visit, I conclude she was rather offended that you did not take the trouble of paying her your respects, eh? The next time I advise you to be more polite."

The jocose manner in which Verocchio spoke perfectly astonished Leonardo. Was the Maestro pleased or angry? He had never addressed him in so familiar a way before. Was it possible that Angela had coaxed her father into such a mood?

for he spoke, too, of Leonardo's *next* visit. He meanwhile muttered something about Donna Placida; that he had not supposed she would have wished to see him.

"Ah, well," resumed Verocchio, "I know there is no love lost between you; but I have forgotten to tell you that Angela gave me her love for you this morning."

"Thanks, Signor," answered Leonardo, hardly crediting what he heard, for never before had the Maestro coupled Angela and Da Vinci in one speech. A sudden sense of happiness came dispelling the fears of the morning, and the boy felt for a time that he could have loved Verocchio. This latter was soon deep in his painting, and silence ensued for some time, during which the pupil was as busy in thought as with his hands and eyes.

The hour of mid-day relaxation drew nigh, and then Verocchio laid aside his palette.

"Stay thy hand, boy," said he, turning to his pupil, "I shall want no more to-day. I have other business though when the sun wanes, in which you will be useful. There is the bell; I shall expect you spruce and smart by the fourth hour again, to accompany yonder picture to its destination."

Leonardo bowed and withdrew, once more surprised at the pleasant tone in which his master addressed him. His going openly accredited as a pupil of Verocchio was a distinction, too, which but seldom fell to any in the junior studio, though the students in the more advanced ranks were all in their turn selected either to see Verocchio's works safe to their destination, or to accompany him in his visits to his patrons and fellow artists. Da Vinci could not resist informing Basilio of this piece of good fortune, and in due time all his companions of course. One or two feigned to be asleep, for they were not a little envious, but the majority were too good-natured, and contented themselves with sly compliments to the *Maestro* Da Vinci.

Leonardo, who was not totally indifferent as to his personal appearance, devoted some extra attention to its arrangement on going home, if we can dignify his one little chamber by that name.

He called Dame Monica out of her customary nap, to beg her to use her skill in polishing the buckle of his belt, and in reviving the once smart appearance of his velvet cap; all her

efforts were unavailing towards the latter, but she endeavoured to persuade its owner that no one would care whether the cap were old or new, at least she would answer for the signori and for the donne. Why, of course, in their presence he could not keep it on his head. This consolation Dame Monica deemed conclusive, and went away, saying that her young lodger need not trouble himself about trinkets and velvets like many who had nothing else to recommend them.

Punctually as four o'clock tolled from the Campanile, Leonardo presented himself in Verocchio's studio. The painter had adjusted his toilette with a care which did not escape the pupil's notice; he was evidently also scrutinising with more than ordinary impartiality the painting he was about to part with; but on perceiving Leonardo, the anxious expression instantly made way for one of apparent unconcern, and lifting the picture into a case prepared for it,—“There, Da Vinci,” he said, “you are but frail yet, but it is not far off to its destination.”

Leonardo, somewhat indignant at the aspersion upon his strength, lifted his burden in

a manner suited to refute it, and master and pupil were soon wending their way through the crowded streets.

Leonardo's curiosity was now fully alive as to the direction the Maestro would take, and in spite of his assumed powers, he could not but confess secretly that he should be glad when he was relieved of his charge. That moment was nigh at hand, for Verocchio soon passed into the Medici gardens, and from them into the palace occupied by Cosmo.

Although the Medici in their quality of citizens avoided alike ostentation of their riches or display of their power, they yet indulged in all the magnificence with which the semi-commercial, semi-warlike Florentines surrounded themselves in time of peace. The love, also, which Cosmo and all his family entertained for learning and the arts, led them to expend vast sums upon their encouragement, and while Florentine genius was thus called forth from obscurity, the republic had no jealous voice against the splendour of the generous patrons.

Thus at the very entrance to Cosmo's palace, there were signs of magnificence which Leonardo had as yet but dreamed of, and which at any

other moment might have riveted his attention ; but with the engrossing prospect of probably being in the presence of a Medici so shortly, the young artist was alike unconscious of the noble proportions of the marble vestibule, and of its chastely sculptured ornaments ; he had no eyes for the porphyry pillars or rich mosaic pavement, neither did he cast one look at a marble group by Ghiberti, which placed anywhere else had given him contemplation for a day. All his thoughts were for the moment new to him, and he mechanically followed his master in silence.

Verocchio proceeded with the air of one who was familiar with the locality, and passing through the great hall, which was tenanted by a few lacqueys alone, he entered an inner one, whence rose a double staircase of colossal proportions. Here he was met by a major-domo, a tall stately personage clad entirely in black, who with much courtesy directed an attendant to conduct the Maestro to the audience chamber ; or, more correctly, the chamber in which those desirous of audiences

Leon their turn. A second servant relieved persion upon his streden, whereby he was able

to mount the staircase with better grace than he could otherwise have done. Verocchio motioned him to his side, and they proceeded through galleries and chambers to that above-mentioned, where the two attendants left them.

It is said that Cosmo shortly before his death, being carried through the spacious apartments of his palace, with the loss of his favourite son weighing heavily on his mind, exclaimed with a sigh, “This is too great a house for so small a family!” And indeed, with an only son a martyr to ill-health, and two grandsons yet almost children, Cosmo could not but fear that the glory of his name would sink into the grave with himself. Insensibly he withdrew into gradual retirement, causing his son Piero, and the young Lorenzo, his grandson, to preside at the public councils, while he himself, though anxious as ever for the weal of his fellow-citizens, limited his intercourse with them to some few learned men and artists, in whose labours he still found interest. Thus it was that Cosmo’s palace, grand and silent, impressed Da Vinci with its own solemn melancholy, though he was far from ascribing his feelings to the true cause.

Verocchio meanwhile took his picture from its covering, and instructed his pupil how to act with it when the right time came. Before he had concluded, the massive doors moved slowly on their hinges, and a majestic major-domo, with staff of office in his hand, motioned them to follow him. He conducted them through two ante-chambers, where a few hats and cloaks betrayed the vicinity of the family ; and then pushing open the massive doors of the next chamber, stepped aside to allow Verocchio and his pupil to enter.

It was Cosmo's favourite apartment, being on the west side of the building ; thus receiving the last rays of the setting sun, and also those fresh breezes so common in Florence. He was now reclining in an arm chair, surrounded by several of his family ; and at the moment the painter entered, was holding a conversation with his philosophical friend, Marsilio Ficino.

But on hearing his visitor's name, he turned round, and greeted him with unaffected cordiality ; glancing also at his youthful attendant with such a benignant smile, as captivated Leonardo instantaneously. The boy's atten-

tion, however, was fixed upon the group surrounding Cosmo ; a flood of emotions and fears overcame him, to explain which we must describe those who caused it.

At Cosmo's side sat his wife, Contessina, busily working a piece of tapestry ; and at her feet knelt a beautiful child, her youngest granddaughter. Opposite to her, on the other side, stood Cornelia de' Medici ; and behind, leaning on the back of Cosmo's chair, was his eldest grandson, the youth Lorenzo.

Da Vinci raised his eyes once, twice, three times, to look at the young widow ; and three times he found the task too much, for at the first glance he had recognised in her the beautiful lady of Santa Croce, and her youthful cavalier in Lorenzo de' Medici. Unconsciously, he stole his hand over the hidden miniature to assure himself of its safety, and that done, he began to doubt within himself whether it would be possible to deliver it to its beautiful owner on such an occasion as the present ; in the midst of these mingled feelings, he observed his master's sign for the presentation of the picture, and he accordingly placed it in the proper light and position ; not, however, without becoming

somewhat heightened in colour as he felt that all eyes were upon him.

"Bravo! little maestro," said Cosmo, as Leonardo retired again slowly to the background; "you have just suited these old eyes of mine."

The picture was then examined, criticised, and admired; while the slightest difference of opinion on any point of Art, immediately entailed an argument between the patron and the artist. Leonardo listened to these disputation without hearing them, for he was burning to restore his treasure to the noble Cornelia, yet was undecided how he should do so. Happening to cast his eye towards her, he perceived that she had turned away from the picture, and was looking at him steadfastly; there was an interest in that glance, or so it appeared to the object of it; and although it called up a deeper blush than before, still he felt for an instant that he had power to address her. Seizing the moment, therefore, he moved quickly towards her, trusting that the liberty might be forgiven in the benefit conferred.

"Lady," said he, "did you not lose something in our church of Santa Croce last fête-

day at even?" Never had Da Vinci found such difficulty in speaking — the words seemed ready to choke him in utterance ; but he ventured to look up when he had finished, and saw that his lovely listener had now a flush of colour in her cheek.

"But too surely," she answered, "but too surely ; is it possible you can know aught concerning my misfortune?" and she looked at Da Vinci half in hope, half incredulously.

"Was it a miniature, lady," continued Leonardo, "set round with precious stones?"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Cornelia ; "have you indeed seen it?—Is it safe?—How can I receive it?"

Her tears were already stealing down her cheeks as she spoke ; but when she observed that the boy was evidently going to produce her valued treasure from beneath his vest, she laid her hand on his shoulder, saying, "Oh, not here—not here; follow me into yonder chamber, if indeed there be no mistake in this matter." A command which Leonardo eagerly obeyed, although, while so doing, he caught a glimpse of the Maestro drawn up in the very extremity of surprised displeasure.

On entering the adjoining room, he found the beautiful Cornelia seated near a table on which she had one elbow supporting her head. Leonardo advanced, and gave into her hand the miniature.

"You see, lady," he said, "the chain of it is broken."

She received both silently, but her emotion was too strong for control, and pressing the restored portrait to her lips, she let her head rest upon the table to hide her weeping. At that moment Lorenzo entered, and perceiving his fair relation in such a distressed state, he stopped short, and looked at Leonardo for an explanation. Leonardo, however, remained silent; then thinking his presence was no longer necessary, he moved a few steps, saying, "Is it your pleasure, lady, that I should retire?"

Cornelia looked up, and smiling through her tears, "Stay," she said, "do you imagine that because these tears are too many to be repressed, I have neither time for other feelings, nor wish to express my gratitude?" Then turning to Lorenzo,—"See, dear Renzo, was I right to give up all hope this morning? This

youth has restored it to me, my precious miniature. How shall I thank you?" continued she, bending her full, deeply expressive eyes upon Leonardo.

"Lady," replied he, "I have seen you smile, and that it was occasioned by aught in my power, is a reward far beyond any you could further bestow, even did I merit a reward at all." Then gaining courage he continued: "But you may perhaps ask, lady, why five days have elapsed without your being reposessed of the miniature. I have seen you once before, and that was in Santa Croce, where I also found that portrait lying on the altar carpet. I believe you did not think there was any one near you, lady, but I remarked that you had missed something before leaving the church, and when I found that jewelled miniature I concluded it to be yours. But you were gone, and although after having once seen you it were difficult to mistake you for another, yet I was ignorant of your name, neither was I acquainted with the cipher at the back of the miniature. All I could do was to keep it safely, and Providence you see, lady, willed its restoration without any effort on my part."

“And was it nothing to keep it safely?” returned Cornelia, “and to restore it uninjured? Is the service rendered less thank-worthy because circumstances may favour its fulfilment? In such wise my gratitude does not view it, and though you cannot, as indeed none can, estimate fully the affection which hangs broken round such a relic as this, believe me gratitude has not yet quite ebbed away with more trivial feelings. How are you named?” she inquired, raising her eyes, which she had sunk in deep melancholy at the latter end of her speech.

“My name, lady, is Leonardo da Vinci,” answered the boy.

“Leonardo da Vinci!—the same, doubtless, for whom the Maestri Pollajuolo and Verocchio could not find praise sufficient. I had imagined you to have been older.”

“I am thirteen years old, lady,” returned Leonardo; “but I think you must have mistaken the name; more likely Lorenzo di Crede, whom every one extols.”

“Nay, it was Leonardo da Vinci, and none other,” returned Cornelia, smiling at the evident sincerity of the boy’s self-depreciation;

"and if you own that name, you must own its praise also."

At that moment the little Nannina sprang into the room. "Monna Contessina looks for you," she exclaimed, throwing her arms round Cornelia, "and Nannina has come to fetch you."

Cornelia took the child's hand; but before leaving the chamber, she held out her own to Leonardo, saying, as he respectfully kissed it, "We shall meet often again, nor shall my thanks be expressed by words alone."

Da Vinci followed the three back into Cosmo's apartment with feelings little short of adoration towards the beautiful Cornelia de' Medici. Nor were they much lessened when he beheld her kneeling between the venerable Cosmo and Contessina, showing them her recovered treasure, and naming Verocchio's pupil as the restorer of it. He marked not the sullen air of his master, as he presented him to Cosmo. All smiled that day upon him ; it was one continued joyousness. Cosmo himself bid him rise in his art to add another name and ornament to Florence, and Cornelia had expressed an interest in him !

So engrossing were the pleasurable results of the audience to Leonardo, that he did not perceive, while returning home, that Verocchio had not once addressed him, and had walked gloomily along with a frown on his countenance. But when he dismissed his pupil for the day, Leonardo was startled by the change in his demeanour; his whole bearing wore the impatience of jealousy. However, he was brief in speech, and Da Vinci retired.

CHAP. VI.

AND now we must ask our reader to go a step back with us, and find himself at the Villa Verrocchio on the morning of the day we have just mentioned. If it proved happy to Leonardo, it was no less eventful to Angela. She was going to Florence.

Poor child ! her joy was ignorance, for she would hardly have felt much had she rightly understood the change to be effected.

Leonardo's visit had indeed been discovered by Donna Placida in her search for the truant Angela; and when Verrocchio returned home from the carousal at Careggi, he was duly apprised of his pupil's doings. The news, proceeding through the somewhat exaggerating medium of the prejudiced dame, did not fail to irritate the painter; who, already excited, cared not on whom he vented his displeasure.

“ Ay ! ” he exclaimed, “ this comes of your letting them grow up together for the last six

years, when a lock on the gate had been ~~en-~~ to prevent their ever meeting."

Donna Placida was stricken dumb at most unlooked-for reproach ; and for all an she pleaded the natural deception of chil in general, as fully proved by the invasic the studio, still fresh in her memory.

" Well," muttered Verocchio, " an end be put to it, and that speedily. Angela : now have other companions than the ba son of the proto-notary !"

Andrea del Verocchio was not a man to without acting ; a thing resolved on in own mind was already half executed : so D Placida was in nowise surprised at heari couple of days later that arrangements made for the removal of her niece into the vent of Santa Rosa del Monte in Flor On her own part she was not grieved at ing with her, having a decided antipath children ; but she could not passively wi Angela's joy on being told she was goin Florence. The child had remained silent moment or two, and then timidly asked wh Aunt Placida was also to live in Flor

Upon the answer proving in the negative, Angela neither cared nor sought to conceal her satisfaction, and this caused Aunt Placida more than one serious passion before the day of departure arrived.

Florence was the horizon of all Angela's hopes and fancies; she had never yet been there, so what with the combined delights of at last accompanying her father thither, of seeing dear Leone (of which she had no doubt), and escaping the scolding Placida, it is a question whether she ever awoke in so happy a mood as on the morning she was to leave Villa Verocchio. Burdened, therefore, with no regrets, she stepped into the little wicker cart, at the side of which her father was to ride. Many a time upon the road was the question repeated — "Is this Florence, Antonio?" And each being replied to by the driver with a negative shake of the head, the child's expectations became gradually stretched beyond any thing she had before imagined. At the door of each dwelling she expected to see Leonardo, and every house that was remarkable in any way she concluded for the moment to be her father's.

At last the dome of the Cathedral and the

Campanile were in sight, as well as other churches and buildings; and Angela, in silent ecstasy, asked no more questions. They passed through the gardened suburbs where flowers and fountains divided the land between them; then penetrating into the more densely populated streets, a new world opened upon Angela. How charming to her eyes was the busy bustle of the thoroughfares, the height of the houses, the tempting little narrow streets, which in their depth of shade looked so inviting to walk in. How happy, thought she, must all the people be who live in Florence. Still she sought for Leone among the foot passengers, and had not yet met him; but she comforted herself with the assurance that it would be impossible to be both in Florence, and not see each other. Her father had not once mentioned his name; but he never did, so that was nothing new. However, as they proceeded for some time through narrow streets and alleys, and yet reached not the place where Angela indefinitely imagined Leone would be, a vague fear of disappointment stole over her excited hopes, which was not dissipated by Verocchio soon afterwards turning to her, and saying:—“Angela,

you are now going among strangers ; but kind as you will find them, remember that your conduct will regulate your happiness, and that whatever you are taught will be with the view of rendering you more fitted to live in the world afterwards. If your mother were now alive, I should not be placing you in a convent ; but I make this sacrifice that you may have the advantage of a superior education, and the society of well-bred and estimable women. I fully expect you to be happy among your new companions, some of whom are about your own age."

Angela heard these words of her father without comprehending their meaning ; her whole mind was bent upon the hope of seeing Leonardo, being now in Florence, and his name was all she listened for. When Verocchio paused, she strove to utter the question—"And Leonardo, shall I not see him ?" which hovered on her lips : but before she had gained the necessary courage, he continued, pointing out a large and venerable building,—"Do you see ? that is the convent ; that turret is the chapel ; those trees are in the garden."

Angela looked mechanically as she was di-

rected, but to speak was beyond her powers. A few minutes more brought them to the outside gate of the convent. Angela looked up at the prison-like portal, flanked as it was by walls of no common height, and had there been time she would have regretted the open vineyards and gardens of the home she had left; but these reminiscences were spared her by Verocchio hastily pulling the chain of the bell suspended over the arched doorway. This summons instantaneously produced the face of the portress at a small grated aperture, and upon her perceiving those without, the huge door began slowly to move on its hinges. On a motion from her father, Angela descended from the little cart, overwhelmed with silent disappointment, and grasping in her hand a bunch of roses she had hurriedly plucked that morning in the joy of her heart for Leonardo. Poor flowers! they were now withered, but she would not leave them.

As they entered the doorway, an elderly lay-sister came forward to meet them, and, as she said, conduct them to the Lady Abbess. They traversed a sort of garden, half court-yard, half grass, the domain of a dozen goats and kids, and entered a second doorway, guarded by a portress,

as the first; thence they were led through the cloisters, past the chapel, into the refectory, a large hall upon the ground floor, and at last into the chamber called the parloir.

Angela had by this time made up in her own mind that she could never be happy again, and had she been alone, this conviction would have been bathed in many tears; but in her father's presence Angela had learnt to restrain her natural feelings, so that she now exhibited but a pale countenance and down-cast eyes while she and Verocchio silently awaited the arrival of the Abbess. They were not long kept in suspense, for a door opening behind the grated partition, the Abbess entered, attended by a very sweet-looking nun. The latter came forward and said, "Our lady the Abbess!" then retired towards the door, whither Angela's eyes followed her. The Abbess seated herself near the grating, and Verocchio remained standing and speaking to her there. The conversation was carried on in a low tone, so that Angela did not hear its purport, nor indeed had she much wish to listen; her thoughts were far away. Nevertheless she had cast a few glances at the young nun behind the grating, with a hope

that she would presently speak to her, for in that meek and calmly-smiling countenance, the poor child read a disposition to sympathise and condole with the unhappy.

How different did the Abbess appear ! Angela dared hardly raise her eyes to her ; she seemed so commanding, so unbending, and so observant. Her glance already had called up some crimson blushes upon Angela's cheek, and the child dreaded the moment when she should come in closer contact with her. It was near at hand ; for after a conversation of about a quarter of an hour, Verocchio led up his little daughter, and presented her in due form, as “a sadly spoiled child, but willing to do as she was bid.” Upon which the Abbess, in her distinct but subdued voice, said that happily no one in the community paused to think what *obedience* meant, as *disobedience* was totally unknown. With these words she turned to her attendant, to whom she made a sign ; the latter then quitted the apartment, but returned in a few minutes. At the same time a lay-sister entered the side of the chamber where the strangers were, and approaching Angela took her by the hand. Verocchio now bade farewell to the Abbess,

and being about to go, embraced Angela, who with an almost breaking heart, had yet no tears. Her father's departure, indeed, was a relief to her, for while he was there she felt obliged to be silent. However, the Abbess, to whom the character of her young pupil was as yet a sealed book, retired in wonderment, saying to her companion, "The child's first parting with its father, and not a tear! What kind of heart is that?" The young nun was silent.

Meanwhile Angela was conducted in the first instance to the dormitory where she was to have a bed, and then down into a large chamber where the inmates of the convent assembled during leisure hours. At that time but very few were there; and now the tears which had begun to trickle on first leaving the parloir, burst forth with all the violence of a pent-up torrent. She reminded herself of her delight during the two previous days; of that very morning, when she had been so happy; of all she had pictured in her mind of beautiful Florence, and of the still greater pleasure she had imagined to have in meeting her dear Leone; all these bright visions she contrasted with the dark and stern reality, and repeated again to herself that she could cer-

tainly never be happy any more. The sorrow of the young stranger was attributed to the natural causes of leaving her home and parting with her father, and the child was suffered to weep on.

At last an old nun, one of those persons who seem to forget they were ever children, approached Angela.

"Why, child," said she, "what a silly young thing thou must be to keep those poor faded roses in thy hand; if they be good for anything stick them in fresh water, and if they be dead throw them away."

Angela looked up at the speaker, and down at her flowers.

"They are dead, but I will not part with them," she replied; "I gathered them for somebody," and the thought increased her tears.

The nun passed on, muttering that never was there any good in talking sense to children. Angela buried herself again in her grief, until she had almost sobbed herself to sleep, when a light soft hand upon her shoulder caused her to look up, and standing by her was the nun who had attended the Abbess; her serene countenance had now an expression of surprise.

"You are strange here, povera!" said she,

smoothing away the thick locks of hair which concealed Angela's face; "and that will soon be otherwise. But you should not cry so, even though you may have cause; we must all part from our relations, and you are more happy than some, for your father will come now and then to see you."

Deceit there was none in Angela's heart, the fountain of truth gushed forth too strongly; therefore casting up her eyes towards the young nun, she exclaimed, "I do not cry for my father, it is not for *him* that I am so unhappy!"

The young nun looked half in doubt, half in pity, at the beautiful and interesting child, and then said, "I cannot understand, then, whence your grief arises, my child; I was told you had but one parent, and you say you do not sorrow for parting with him."

Angela felt the soft reproof conveyed in the answer of her companion, and she wept the more, but still shook her head in confirmation of what she had said before.

The nun continued: "But we will talk of that by-and-by. I have now come to fetch you to the Lady Abbess, who desires to see you in her private chamber; therefore dry your

tears quickly, for the supérieure waits for no one."

An order from the Abbess had the effect of speedily restoring Angela's self-possession; and in a few minutes the traces of her tearful fit were all that remained visible. As she followed her conductor along the vast corridors of the building, the young nun said, "My name is Sister Madalena, and I am now in my turn in attendance on our lady; but in a day or two shall be at liberty, and then we can see each other during recreation."

"May I then call you Sister Madalena?" asked Angela.

"By no other name," replied the nun; so saying, she opened the door of the Abbess's chamber.

It was a lofty apartment, furnished, however, in the plainest possible way, and ornamented only with insignia of a cloistered life, such as crucifixes, paintings of sacred subjects, and artificial flowers. It was lighted by three windows opening upon a small terrace, communicating with the garden below by flights of steps. In each of the windows was a small marble statue of an apostle, one of which

Angela recognised as her father's work, a cast of it being preserved at the Villa Verocchio, while the original had been presented by the artist to the convent on the occasion of his wife's death.

The Abbess was seated at an embroidery frame, busily employed upon it, when Sister Madalena and Angela entered; on perceiving the red eyes of the latter, she cast a scrutinising glance at her, and then pushing the frame to the young nun, "You must work for me to-day, Sister Madalena," said she, "my eyes ache, so I must give up the sole credit of the altar-piece." Then looking at Angela, "Come nearer, little one," she continued, "and give me some account of your life hitherto."

Angela approached the supérieure, but gradually drew nearer to the young nun, upon whom she already looked as a friend.

The Abbess, who was in her element when conducting any interrogation, steadily fixed her eyes upon some object on the floor of the apartment, and then said to the trembling Angela, "You do not remember your mother?"

"Ah, no, Signora; she died when I was but two years old," replied Angela.

"Ah, true; and then you went to live in the Val d'Arno with your father?"

"With Aunt Placida," interposed Angela; "my father came only once a week for a day or two, except during the hot weather, when he stayed a month or so."

"And your aunt kept house, I see, and spoiled you," added the Abbess, raising her eyes to Angela with a half smile.

Angela was silent; she was thinking whether being scolded every day meant being spoiled.

"And what have you been taught?" continued the questioner; "can you read or write?"

Angela answered that she could read a little, but beyond that she could only work a little tapestry. Many blushes followed this confession, as she had imbibed from Da Vinci some veneration for knowledge in general.

"And have you been accustomed to attend mass diligently?" resumed the Abbess.

"On Sundays and fête days, when aunt also went," answered the child; "but at other times not, as Aunt Placida scarcely ever let us go beyond the garden, that is myself, and Leone would not go without me."

"Who? who would not go without you?" replied the Abbess, looking up.

"Leone,—Leonardo," said Angela; then quickly added, "Ah, you do not know who he is; his name is Da Vinci, Leonardo da Vinci; I call him my brother, because I love him so very much." And her eyes glistened at the mere pleasure of mentioning her favourite.

"And Leonardo, he lived with you?" asked the Abbess. "It is strange your father did not mention this to me."

"Oh, no; he did not live with us, but he came in the garden to me every day till he went away."

"And where is he gone?"

"He is in Florence, Signora; he is a pupil of my father's now," and the thought that he was so near and yet so far, caused the banished tears to creep back, though checked in time.

"And you had no other companions then, at home?" pursued the Abbess, who had remarked Angela's childish emotion.

"No, Signora."

"Ah, well, you will not lack companionship here; we have several maidens of your

own age, and, moreover, many kind sisters who will care for you, if you deserve it."

Angela was silent; if she had spoken, she must have expressed her thoughts, which were, that all her future playmates could not make one Leonardo.

The Abbess went on. "I have to tell you that I have granted you permission to see your father every third Sunday, when he will come; that is, of course, supposing your conduct warrants such indulgence;" and the supérieure looked at Angela for an expression of pleasure or gratitude, but the child's eyes were bent on the floor, and she was silent.

The young nun's voice now whispered, "Do you not thank our lady for her kindness?" Angela felt the piercing eyes of the Abbess fixed upon her, and for all answer she turned sobbing to Sister Madalena, and hid her face upon the work-frame.

"But this is a strange commencement," said the Abbess, who was not accustomed to see her favours treated slightly. "What is the meaning of this, can you tell, Sister Madalena?"

"With due reverence, lady," replied the

nun, “methinks the poor child needs rest both of mind and body; the excitement of to-day has unsettled her, and she as yet feels this no home; with your permission I would see her retire to rest, and to-morrow she will be better able to attend to the words you honour her with.”

“Well, be it so; and you will, perhaps, discover the cause of this most inconsistent conduct, for it is certainly beneath me to inquire,” replied the Abbess, and thereupon rose from her seat and descended to the garden.

When she had gone, Angela’s grief was unrestrained, and she gave utterance to it so far as to say, “she was *very* unhappy!”

“Ah, my child,” replied her companion, “thou art not the only one, povera! But do not hoard up these little sorrows; to-morrow the sun may shine for thee also; but thou hast not pleased our Lady Abbess, and must make peace with her; now come to the sleeping chambers, and if thou have anything upon thy heart, whisper it to me, and it will be all the lighter.”

Sister Madalena’s soft clear voice fell like balm upon Angela’s troubled spirit; she had

never loved any one of her own sex; Aunt Placida was not loveable; but Angela had dreamed of, and pictured to herself her mother, that parent whose loss had been so irreparable. She had fancied her smiling, mild, and angelic; her bright soft eyes beaming with purity of soul, and casting looks of love down upon her child. Sister Madalena was the first person who, in Angela's eyes, at all approached the image she had created; the influence of the likeness therefore effected much, and it was not surprising that, after a moment's tremulous hesitation, Angela threw her arms round the young nun, exclaiming, "Yes, I will tell you every thing, and will love you too very much, because you speak so kindly to me, and do not look severe like the Lady Abbess, or my father, or Aunt Placida."

"Hush! what is that you say?" replied Sister Madalena; "I cannot, you know, listen to one word of disrespect, nor ought you to wish me to do so."

"Is it disrespectful?" inquired the child; "I will try and do nothing you say is wrong; but you know they do look severe, do they not, the Lady Abbess, and ——"

"Hush! again," and as the nun spoke they entered the dormitory. "See, here is your bed, those belong to your little companions; they are yet in the garden; until they come I will sit here, and you can tell me about the home you have left, and the reason why you were very unhappy."

"I am happier now," replied Angela, "and you have made me so I think; I suppose you yourself are very, very happy, as you have so soon made me feel more so — are you?"

The young nun paused for a few seconds before she answered — "Yes, I am happy now, my dear child; I was not so a little while ago, because then I was seeking happiness elsewhere than in myself. Now it is here," and she put her hand on her heart, "and I have found it."

"But I am sure you are so happy, because you are good," interposed Angela; "you look so kind and good, I was not afraid of *you* down there in the parlor."

"Afraid! what should you fear, little one? It is only sin of which you should be afraid; and unless you have done wrong, you must not fear a grave countenance."

"You would be afraid too; but I will not

speak of it to you, because perhaps you would say it was disrespect. I will tell you all about Leone, shall I?"

Angela's eyes both brightened and filled with tears while she recounted to her companion the hopes and disappointments of the day; then she went back to earlier reminiscences, and described the favourite bosquet and the delightful studio; her happiness depending upon and created by her dear Leonardo; her fear of Aunt Placida, and awe of her father; the long tapestry tasks of the former, and grave admonitions of the latter; her young grief at parting with and joy at again seeing Da Vinci; and, in short, all the thoughts of her heart, such as they had been and were at that present time. Then she fell into a train of doubt and fear about perhaps never again seeing Leonardo, and asked the young nun many times whether she thought the Lady Abbess would ever permit a meeting, if it were for a few minutes only, or whether it were at all likely that Leone might leave Florence and go where she would never hear of him? He would not forget her, *that* was impossible; but did he know where she was?

These thoughts and questions chased sleep from Angela's weary eyes for a long time, and Sister Madalena sat by the bed and listened as a comforter, hearing much, but speaking little. At last she said, " You are almost ready for slumber, Angela, and methinks you have not yet repeated either a prayer or hymn to acknowledge this past day, and to ask protection for the morrow; I will say one for you, and but require that your thoughts should follow."

Angela raised herself upon her pillow and listened attentively to Sister Madalena, while the latter repeated some short hymns; then gradually, as the low clear voice went on, the child forgot the anxieties and sorrows of the day, bright visions played around her, she was happy, and a smile shone on her countenance from the depths of her being,—true proof of the peace that reigned there.

When the young nun arose, she turned to Angela to bid her compose herself to sleep, but Nature had spoken first, she was asleep. Madalena remained a few minutes gazing at her with a compassionate expression, and then left the apartment.

The fortunate chance which had thrown together the young nun and Angela Verocchio, was of no small influence in rendering the latter happy in her new abode. Still strange and timid among her companions, Angela viewed Sister Madalena as one who understood her, and already a change was working in her youthful mind, which she experienced without comprehending. This was a higher estimation of the female character. Up to the day of her entrance into the convent, she had exclusively centred her respect and admiration upon the stronger sex. Poor child ! her Aunt Placida, and the old cook, Veronica, were her sole representatives of the weaker one. What wonder that she had often wished to be a boy, and as clever as Leone ? But now she forgot this ; a new world was opened to her, peopled by women, governed by them, and presenting in every point a total contrast to the scene of Angela's past life. She had been struck by the courteous respect of her father towards the Lady Abbess ; she observed the strict discipline and order that reigned throughout the convent, the deference of the inferiors to the superiors, the general awe with which the Lady Abbess was looked up to. With

regard to this last point, so simple and ignorant was our little Angela, that she accounted for it by supposing the Lady Abbess to be doubtless very clever in some particular way, as her own father was ; and in the course of the third day she ventured to inquire what her talent might be. This display of what some elderly nuns termed pagan ignorance, caused, however, general merriment among the younger members of the community, and, scarcely suppressing a smile, Sister Madalena took upon herself the explanation of Angela's mistake.

From her lips the child first heard of the dangers and temptations of the world, the hidden thorns of worldly happiness, the mortifications and disappointments of all who sought it on the stage of life, and, lastly, the peaceful existence of those who early renounced the cares and pleasures of life to devote their days to the perfecting of their souls.

And Angela would listen with full belief and childish awe, for she felt that the young nun possessed what she extolled so highly ; but she soon remarked that that sweet, mild, and hopeful countenance shone among others solitarily ; all had *not* Sister Madalena's serene

expression. This puzzled the child, and she confided her perplexity to her friend. Sister Madalena, however, bade her to cease examining countenances, as they were often but false indicators of the thoughts within, and to employ her time in discovering the ways by which she could please others and rule herself. Angela grew red; but looking up after a moment's pause, "I will try to be like you," she said, "and then every body must love me."

Thus the days passed, none of them being much distinguished by anything within the walls of the convent; the same quiet and monotonous routine went on as usual, and under its influence the mind of Angela (like a delicate flower, which, transplanted into a sheltered spot, first droops and languishes, but afterwards grows anew and with fresh beauty) began gradually to gain strength and to expand.

CHAP. VII.

ON Leonardo's return to his own apartment (where old Monica was waiting in hopes of a chat with her young lodger, and also to show him a painting done by her son), he found the chamber appear smaller than ever before ; the ceiling had seemingly been lowered, the window narrowed. What a contrast, at all events, was it to the palace of the Medici ; and, to carry further the comparison, how different was Monica to the elegant Cornelia. The boy was more thoughtful than usual, and his hostess's kind but ceaseless chatter affected him disagreeably ; to avoid it, therefore, he pretended some commission in the town, and left the good woman in the middle of her ecstasy over her son's genius.

Leonardo wandered about without an object, but revelling in the delights of the day. Had he been at liberty, he would hardly have let pass an hour before starting for Villa Verocchio, to share such pleasure with Angela, after telling her what had occurred ; but the Maestro, so

smiling that very morning, was now in a very different mood, and if his pupil had then presumed to meditate another trip to the Val d'Arno, such hopes were far from his heart now that Verocchio was sullen and silent. Nevertheless, Da Vinci consoled himself with the thought that he could easily go to his father's house under some excuse, and thence to the villa was but a step; his father was then at home and might be wishing to see him. This plan he decided on carrying into effect the following Sunday.

In the midst of his reflections, he had arrived at the open stall or shop of a picture dealer, Filippo Resi, well known in Florence, not only for his good eye and judgment, but also for his love of Art altogether. He was a general favourite, both among artists and patrons, though perhaps somewhat partial to the interests of the former next to his own, for he was a true Florentine in matters of business. His exhibition of paintings collected in the aforesaid shop, and carefully preserved from the sun by thick awnings, was a point of attraction to many who passed by, and it was a rare hour when no one was to be seen standing

in front of it. Filippo Resi himself was usually to be seen in the interior of his shop, conversing with buyers or sellers, and arguing equally well either to deprecate or enhance a work, while every now and then he would dart a glance into the street to judge a little of those who were attracted to his window. He had had experience during a career of forty years in analysing the Florentines ; he could distinguish the citizen from the inhabitant of the suburbs, the inhabitant of the suburbs from him of the Val d'Arno, the attorney from the notary, the banker from the money changer, and the artist from them all. As Leonardo paused before the shop, it happened that the master was alone, quietly sipping some lemonade while waiting the approach of a customer. He glanced at the boy, and perceived that he was an artist's pupil. "Via!" he exclaimed, addressing him, "do not be afraid to enter. I'll warrant me thou'rt a young Cimabue ; look around you, I can boast of some good brushes. Ay, that is a Masaccio, and that a Fra Angelico, such as you have never seen before. Ay, you may look at it ! They think at his convent they have the best ; Lord pity their ignorance !

St. Mark's Madonna could not stand before this!"

" You will not keep it long, doubtless?" inquired Da Vinci, who, on looking at the collection of great masters, felt a flush of enjoyment come over him; " have you as yet valued it?"

" Ay, that is it—that is it!" replied Filippo, sorrowfully looking at his treasure; " it is invaluable, figlio mio! None but Cosmo should purchase it, and he has no sight left to appreciate it. It will go to some citizen who wishes to show the length of his purse. Poor Fra Angelico! I will part dearly with you; whoever takes you shall leave behind two thousand ducats!"

" Ahi! two thousand ducats!" exclaimed Da Vinci; " Fra Angelico might be rich if he could live again."

" Rich!" replied Filippo, in a tone of contempt; " he is rich enough now; for though the Church have not canonised him, I am pretty sure he must be a saint by this time. Who should be a saint if not Fra Angelico, who painted the visions that were vouchsafed to him?" Then, after a pause, " What are *you*?"

he continued, sipping his lemonade — “a Castagna, or a Filipepi, or a Lippi?”

“Neither, Signor,” replied Da Vinci; “I am in the Maestro Verocchio’s school.”

“Ah, Verocchio! He works well, but his genius is cold; it lies in marble. There is Pollajuolo, too, he must need have a brush, the chisel is too heavy. Ay, young Cimabue, do not lead thy genius, if thou have any, but suffer it to lead thee.”

As he spoke an artist entered, and Leonardo, after saluting Filippo, walked away, the two thousand ducats ringing in his ears, and the old man’s last words impressed deeply in his memory.

He had already combated his own fancy, had brought down his own will to submit, in obedience to the directions of Basilio, to the square and antiquated rules of what was then termed Art; but while so doing he longed for the time to come when his own name would be sufficient guarantee for any innovation; that that day would come, if he lived, he felt assured when in sanguine moods, though at other times he would wonder at his own audacity of expectation.

The moon shone brightly before he returned

home, and illuminated Angela's picture as he entered. "Yes!" he inwardly exclaimed, "I will not grovel upon this earth, my thoughts (he did not dare to say *genius*) shall be free; let them lead me where they list, so that Angela be happy, and I with her!"

Two days afterwards, it being Sunday, Da Vinci not only went to his father's, but procured a stout old mule to convey him thither, at the pressing instance of Basilio, who took the expense upon himself.

"Figlietto!" said he, "these florins are for thy holiday-making; why destroy thy shoe-leather to no purpose, when a beast is to be had? Nay, I will take no refusal, thou rascal! though I see one ready to pop out; thou hast nicely worried me with chalks and plaster, and this is the sole reparation I will receive; so get thee a strong beast, without vicious tricks of a certain, and ride on him steadily, figlio mio, so that whole bones may be brought back."

Basilio's pleasure consisted in petting and treating his young pupils, so Leonardo acceded joyfully, and the old man went to see him off.

"Gently, gently, Da Vinci!" exclaimed Basilio, as his pupil cantered away. "Nay, the

boy is wild; still he goes well. St. Antonio make the beast sure-footed!"

A ride of two hours brought Leonardo to his native valley, and on dismounting at his father's door, he felt a most natural impatience to pursue his path to Villa Verocchio; so strong indeed was it, that after tying up the mule he resolved upon going on at once before seeing his father. He threw down some hay and oats before his steed, and then sprang along the path with brisk and nimble steps.

His whole being was enwrapt in one word, and that one Angela; he pictured on his way the delight of a second surprise and second meeting; recalled the pleasure of the first, and repeated to himself all the tidings he had to relate. Half running, half walking, he soon arrived at the garden wall; he listened for footsteps or voices; Angela used to sing when by herself; all was silent. Da Vinci leapt the wall and looked around, still no signs of Angela; her watering-pot, it is true, was upon the ground, but empty, and a few pots of flowers had evidently received no water for several days. An uneasy sensation crept over Leonardo; might his beloved friend be ill?

With a trembling voice he ventured to call her name ; no answer, save the flight of some birds disturbed by the sound. "It is not mass-hour," he murmured to himself, "she must be here." So, gathering courage to face Placida should he fall in with her (Verocchio, he remembered, was invited that day to a meeting of fellow-artists in Florence), he slowly but anxiously ascended the garden. As he advanced, sounds of voices proceeded from the villa, and although he could not have decided on their ownership, yet he doubted not that the one he wished to hear was among the number.

Still he did not see Angela, and it was evident he must make a bold face and seek her in-doors ; knowing, however, that Veronica bestowed more affection upon him than did her mistress, he bent his steps first towards her apartments. As to her actual presence, he was guided thither by her shrill voice, at the height of its powers, declaiming against Placida's sordid and sparing allowance of olive oil. He waited a moment until the gust had calmed, and then entering the kitchen, "Buon giorno, amica !" said he, enjoying Veronica's surprise. "You thought not to see me, did you ?"

"Young master Da Vinci!" exclaimed the old Veronica, forgetting her previous wrath. "Ahi! what blessed wind has brought you back? and you are grown, too; the great city is the place, I have always said so. It makes men of boys, and that's what my departed husband has said in his time. Come, don't run off again, for it seems many a day since I had a chat with you. See the fresh gathered peaches, are you thirsty?"

"But Angela," interposed Leonardo, who grudged each minute as it flew.

"Ah! the sweet little mistress! Have you seen her? — but of course not."

"No," answered Leonardo, "where is she? I am seeking her; there is no one in the garden, is she above stairs?" and he turned towards the door.

Veronica looked first with surprise at the boy's ignorance, and then with fear at telling him the truth. "Pazienza! I was going to say that our sweet child —"

"Is Angela here?" cried Da Vinci, struck by Veronica's perplexed visage.

"Here! No, Signor."

Da Vinci was gone. Blind to all consequences

he rushed along the corridor which united the offices and the house, violently kicking aside some fruit baskets in his way, and forgetting that Veronica might perhaps, as well as Dame Placida, be able to give him the desired information. But disappointment and anger were both predominant. Arrived at the door of the vestibule of the house, he found it locked, for there were two communications. Obliged to retrace his steps, he did so more slowly, and meantime reflected within himself that Placida would doubtless tell him nothing willingly, even if he asked her; so again entering the kitchen — “Cara Veronica!” he began, “forgive my hasty temper; after all your kindness too! But you so astonished me; I had expected to see Angela.”

“Basta!” exclaimed Veronica, with tears in her eyes, “I was not angry; I thought of a certain you knew all about it — that the sweet child was gone off to Florence.”

“To Florence, Veronica!” cried Da Vinci.

“Ay, to the city. I have missed her like my own child, I can tell you, and that’s more than her aunt has.”

“And when did she go? and whither has

she gone in Florence? and why did she go at all?" exclaimed Da Vinci, whose whole frame was visibly affected by the unexpected news. "In Florence, and without my knowing of it!"

"Via! via! figlietto!" said Veronica, in a soothing tone, for she had never beheld the boy so much excited; "do not take the disappointment to heart so, it won't last for ever you know; and I will tell you all I know for fact. The saints keep the sweet child! Let me see; this is Sunday; two days she has been gone, and long days too I have found them."

"Two days!" cried Leonardo, starting up, for he had been sitting with his face concealed against the table; "*not Friday*—she did not leave—it was not *Friday*!"

"Ai! and what do you know?" answered Veronica; "I tell you she left this early Thursday morning,—no, *Friday* I mean,—with the Maestro for Florence; and, moreover, she was in Antonio's light cart, and I tucked her in, and kissed her the very last of all. Ah! she was so happy, and asked me why I had tears in my eyes."

Leonardo had now a scarlet colour on his cheek, and listened with intense anxiety to Ve-

ronica, who went on:—"I might well have spared her a few tears, for I have known her since she was born, and now when shall I see her again? But I was going to tell you whither she went; they call the place, I think, Santa—Santa—Rosa del Monte."

"A convent!" exclaimed Da Vinci.

"Ay, to be sure. It's all very well for nuns and old people to be kept as in a great cage, but lack a day, for a child like our Angela! Poor little thing! she will soon lose her spirits; and they'll make a nun of her, that's as certain as that I am speaking to you."

Leonardo, who did not need to look forward for additional regrets, paid but slight attention to Veronica's last phrase.

"As to that, 'tis a long time hence, Veronica," he said; "but why has she left home at *all*?"

"Oh, a freak—a freak. The Maestro has strange ideas; it was all arranged in one evening. May he not repent it many a day!" and Veronica caught up a frying-pan to clean, in order to conceal, in some degree, the vexation of her feelings.

Leonardo was also silent; his sorrow, bitter as it was, had made place for anger against Ve-

rocchio, for having sported with his feelings and deceived him on the previous Friday. He now recalled to mind the altered demeanour of the Maestro, his jocularity and his smiles, and remembered also, what indeed had made but small impression, the surly bitterness of their parting in the evening. And that very day he had evidently placed Angela where Leonardo could not and should not see her. None, save that being who loves, and has ever loved but one in the world, can estimate Leonardo's feelings; it seemed almost as if life were lost to him; in youth the horizon of life is so bounded. What wonder, then, that, naturally of a warm temperament, Da Vinci's whole being was momentarily concentrated in anger? Gifted with large capacities he felt intensely, and the swelling veins upon his forehead betrayed the conflict of his thoughts. Veronica, unaccustomed to behold any anger but a loud one, nor herself knowing any other, hardly comprehended what was passing within the boy, but fetching a little cold water she pressed him to drink some. Da Vinci pushed it negatively away, and then rising impetuously, "Do not mention, Veronica, that you have seen me to-day. Addio! I shall not come again,"

he said, and turned into the garden with a quick step. He felt impatient to quit the ground owned by Verocchio ; the garden was suddenly become a sterile wilderness; the Val d'Arno itself had lost its charm for him. To Florence again! was the cry in his bosom; Angela is there, to Florence therefore! Leonardo traversed the garden towards the spot by which he had entered ; the path led through the bosquet where so many happy hours had been passed ; but Da Vinci thought not of them ; they had died ; deeply wrapt in contending passions, the boy was almost out of boyhood.

Suddenly a shadow was cast upon the path before him ; he looked up and met the steady glance of him who occupied his thoughts—Verocchio. It was as if the power of his thoughts had raised up their object, flesh and blood, before him.

Verocchio had assumed a cold triumphant expression, evincing no surprise or anger at the meeting ; while Da Vinci, neither intimidated by previous rules of respect, nor embarrassed by so unlooked-for a collision, returned the steady piercing glance of the Maestro. Neither eye flinched for a few seconds ; each read

the thoughts of the other, but neither spoke. Still it would have seemed that Verocchio, after having tried to crush Leonardo with his eye, despaired of doing so, for of a sudden, assuming, as if he were wasting time upon the boy, an air of unconcern (expressed by a motion of the hand, that active ally of the Italian language), he turned on his heel and left Da Vinci, who proceeded likewise in silence upon his way. Without interchange of words, the Maestro and his pupil were determined, each in his own heart, to try their strength together.

Leonardo's spirit was lighter when he was out of Verocchio's grounds ; but the buoyancy of the previous hour had fled. He walked slowly now, to cool his heated passions, and to think of what really had occurred. If he dared analyse the glance he had fixed on the Maestro, he would have found defiance in it ; but even without such a process, Leonardo had little doubt but that the morrow he would be dismissed Verocchio's school. He had therefore seldom experienced more various and engrossing emotions than when he arrived at his father's house. In the vestibule he met Pietro.

“ Ah, figliuolo ! it is *thy* beast I found in the

stable, eating as if provisions were scarce at home. You don't often bring either yourself or such visitors, otherwise it would soon devour your income. Have you brought any things to show us?"

"What things?" asked the boy, absently.

"*What* things! Why, what things but your drawings, or paintings, or whatever you are about now?"

"Oh! the *studies*, do you mean?" answered Leonardo, half smiling. "They would not much amuse you; besides, they are large—so—"

"Well, if not those, some others. You do not pretend that you can't show me what progress you are making? I never see the Maestro by any chance, and what know I of the matter? You may be careless and lazy, for aught I know; or, on the other hand, be getting a-head of your teachers. Time is going on; and unless I can be certain you are using it well, I should be thinking of some other profession for you,—you understand! You are not living on air, you know, at Florence. I am expecting you soon to gain something towards your livelihood, if not as an artist, as a lawyer, clerk, or some-

thing of that kind; or you might get into the Church, perhaps."

Leonardo, during his father's speech, had exhibited various signs of impatience, and at the conclusion turned away abruptly, to prevent himself giving vent to some ideas which burned in his artist mind. In a few moments he trusted his voice to answer,—“The Maestro is, I believe, quite content with what I have done, considering how short a time I have been in the school: but if you would speak with him, or the Maestro Basilio (who teaches in our studio), you might know far more than I can tell you.” So saying he left the hall and passed into the reception chamber.

There he found Donna Sabina, his step-mother. After they had exchanged a few cold greetings Pietro joined them. He was evidently perplexed: he wished to be assured of his son's talents, and yet felt much averse to have a consultation with those dreaded judges the artists of Florence.

“Caro figlio!” he began, “can you not paint me something — some trifle or other? But *painted*, mind you! See here, upon this, would it not do?” and as he spoke he took from a

table a round piece of wood, planed and partly polished.

Leonardo drew near to examine it. "It is out of the old fig-tree," continued Pietro, "and sound beautiful wood it is. I have kept it as a curiosity."

"And Leonardo is to make it a still greater one, is he not?" added Sabina, in a half-sneering tone.

The boy turned quickly towards her, as if he had been stung; and then taking the wooden shield, "Give it me, father," said he, "and I will try what can be done. The subject I must choose, and the result I will bring you, when it is finished. I will go and pack it up to take back with me."

So saying, he left the apartment, very glad of an excuse to do so. As for Pietro, he rubbed his hands: "The boy has talents; he caught at it. I'll have none of your artists' opinions. Filippo Resi is my man," he said. "I shall be curious to see the subject the youth takes."

Shortly afterwards Leonardo and the "rottella" were on their way to Florence. The poor mule, if he could have spoken, might per-

haps have found that Leonardo carried back a heavy heart. As the hours passed slowly by, it is true he lost the first violence of passion; but the spirit of it remained, mingled with a bitter sense of something akin to unhappiness. Directly he arrived again in his own chamber, he locked himself in, and gave free vent to all the irritations of the day, his dislike of Verocchio, and disappointment as regarded Angela. He threw himself upon his bed, but sleep was far away; the bell of the Campanile recorded a new day, the first and second hours of it, and still the boy had neither slept nor sought rest. When the moon waned, he struck fire and lighted his little lamp; then taking up the board he had brought with him, he began to make designs for the painting on it. They were very strange,—nay, ugly. First, the yawning jaws of a dragon; then that was laid aside for a hideous Medusa, with knotted snakes; then a countenance neither human nor animal, wonderful and horrible. With this last the artist seemed tolerably content, and he smiled as it were in mockery. Throwing down his pencil, he again sank into reflection: but nature was now more weary, and he fell asleep.

CHAP. VIII.

THE following (or more properly the same) morning, at the usual hour, Basilio was busy among his young students, all of whom had arrived but Da Vinci; his absence was most unusual, and many a surprised and impatient look did the Maestro send towards the door before the truant artist made his appearance.

“ Pardon,” said Leonardo; “ I am late, am I not, Maestro? I overslept myself.”

“ You have not been ill, figliuolo? ” interrupted Basilio, struck by the haggard expression of Da Vinci’s countenance; “ or had a tumble off that animal yesterday, or — ”

“ Neither one nor the other, nor anything at all,” interrupted Leonardo; “ the mule was quiet enough for a priest. But what is this, Maestro? ” inquired he, when on moving to his easel he perceived that his name had been effaced from off it.

“ Ahimè! that is why I had wished you to come early,” said Basilio, with an unrepressed

sigh ; "you do not draw here to-day, figlio mio ! you are no longer my pupil!"

Da Vinci's lip quivered, but he did not speak. "Why," thought he, "do I feel surprised ? I was prepared for this." He took up his portfolio, dared not hazard a glance at Basilio, but while picking up his cap from the floor, "Addio Maestro !" said he, "I will see you this evening."

"Che c' è !" exclaimed Basilio, in the utmost perplexity ; "What does the boy mean ? Whither are you going ? Did you not understand what I said ?"

"But too well, Maestro," returned the young Da Vinci, "that I was no longer your pupil ; your own words, and plain ones." So nodding to some of the nearer students, who were all in a state of curious excitement, he again moved towards the door.

"Stay, boy !" cried Basilio, catching hold of him ; "What *does* he mean ? He has lost his senses, as well as overslept himself !"

"Nay, Maestro," interrupted Da Vinci, "if you think I will stay to make apologies, I will tell you at once that I will *not* do so, and thereupon, basta !"

"The boy is mad! Apologies—what apologies? Have I not told you that you are no longer my pupil?—Have I not told you how sorry I am to lose you?—Have I not told you of your promotion of course to the next studio?—What then?"

"What, Maestro!" exclaimed Leonardo, hardly believing what he heard; "Verocchio advances me?"

"Have I not been telling you so for the last half hour? I never found you dull before, Da Vinci," answered Basilio, "and now you are like all the rest, impatient for this door to close upon you, and bid good bye to your first teacher. Ah, well! I am sorry to lose you, but you will not forget me, Da Vinci, eh?"

"Never, Maestro!" cried Leonardo, throwing his arms round the old man, "nor your kindness either; you have placed my foot on the first step of the ladder, and if I climb high I will still bethink me by whose help I climbed at all."

"Ah, yes," answered Basilio, sorrowfully; "but do not think the ladder is a short one, or that you will ever see the top of it; all who do so too soon, are certain of never beholding it

at all. Still you have a fair chance, I may say a fair chance, at all events till you get to the real trials. *Và via!*" he exclaimed, turning sharply to the young students, who had crept round from their easels to see what was going on; "are you not ashamed of your laziness? Not one pencil at work! Is that the way you expect to get promoted, you pieces of idleness? Come, no more nonsense. Move your concerns in there, Leonardo," pointing to the door of the next studio; "Signor Gasparo expects you, doubtless." Then in a lower tone he said, "Let me hear how you get on this evening."

The door opened, and laden with his various drawing materials, Leonardo found himself in his new studio, and in presence of the Maestro Gasparo. Notwithstanding the natural pride at the step he had made, and the pleasant revulsion of feeling occasioned by the surprise, he felt sorry when the good-natured face of Basilio was shut out from his view.

And Gasparo was such a complete contrast in every respect. Clever, but confident—a good instructor, but a harsh one—jocose, but satirical—Da Vinci's new master made no very pleasant impression upon him.

"Leonardo da Vinci," began Gasparo, "have you got a bit of chalk? I suppose you must have your name scribbled on your easel, or you won't be happy? Ah! we don't want that bundle of studies here; we know what they are worth, old Basilio generally puts in half for his pupils! You won't find me so easy, my young cock, though, doubtless, you have been crowing pretty loudly among your companions at having obtained permission to leave them!"

Leonardo bore raillery very badly, and though he preserved a wise silence, still he became red, and was annoyed to be the laughing-stock of the studio. He was much relieved, therefore, at receiving studies to begin upon, for once at work he cared for nothing around him.

Leonardo da Vinci had been much mistaken in imagining that Verocchio would dismiss him from the school because he was displeased. The keen-sighted artist perceived in his young pupil too much promise to afford to lose him. Verocchio, if he had spoken his real feelings, would have said: "I have an hundred pupils, and *one* painter among them." So far, therefore, from conceiving the idea of getting rid of that only one, Verocchio had serious fears

lest the boy should of himself quit the school, through anger at having been deceived about Angela; and anxious to prevent that result if possible, he sent early to Basilio with the order to promote Da Vinci when he should make his appearance.

To tell the exact truth also, Verocchio felt some weight off his mind, when, on visiting his studios in the afternoon, he perceived Leonardo in his new position. Gasparo, it must be remarked, always had one favourite among his pupils, and looking upon his new scholar as an A B C child, he could not help wondering that the Maestro should bestow either time or attention upon him.

“*Well, Da Vinci,*” Verocchio had said, “you copy well; still I care not for facsimiles, do you understand? Do your best, and especially seek life; if a model be *dead*, that is no reason that your copy shall be so; exercise your own reason. Remember that your ultimate object is nature.”

These were the first words addressed by Verocchio to his pupil, that at all impressed Leonardo with an idea that his master was interested in his progress, and coming as they did

after the short but angry meeting of the previous day, the boy received the impression strongly, that Verocchio would have him understand the difference between the artist and the friend. He listened to the Maestro's directions, therefore, silently, merely bowing coldly when he passed on ; but they sank into his mind, and united with the hint of Filippo Resi.

As soon as the hour of breaking up arrived, Da Vinci bethought him of his work at home, and after a friendly word or two with Basilio, he ran off to procure some of the necessary materials for his first painting. He did not mention his project to any one, for not having yet used colours or oils, he felt somewhat doubtful as to the result of the attempt, and perhaps the Maestro, if it came to his knowledge, might disapprove it ; so not even excepting Basilio, he determined to keep his own counsel ; happy, if to the unlearned eyes of his father, he might be deemed clever enough to become an artist.

The preparations for the undertaking occupied some little time ; there was the rotella to be covered with plaster, the colours to be ground, the design to be accurately drawn ; but the boy's heart was in his work, and all came

alike. In order to be able to commence the painting the next day, he continued until late in the evening drawing and finishing the design he had fixed upon. It was the head of a monster (for his wish was partly to astonish and terrify his father), composed of every reptile he could think of; horrible to look at, it seemed alive, breathing death and fury from its open jaws and flaming eyes upon all who beheld it.

"That will do," said Leonardo, as he put it aside and smiled; "my step-mother will think me mad,—and what would Angela say? she would nearly be afraid. Poor Angela! does she think of me as often as I do of her?" With this thought on his lips he sought rest, and dreamed of being in a convent chapel, where he heard Angela singing, but could not see her; and her voice was so clear and beautiful, he could have listened for ever, when suddenly some one near him exclaimed, "It is an angel!" Leonardo started, for it was Basilio who had spoken; the old man seemed in a trance of pleasure, but Leonardo burst into tears, and cried aloud, "No, it is my Angela, my own Angela!" And he found himself awake, and

the sun was pouring in upon his bed, for he had forgotten to close the outside shutters the night before. The Campanile tolled four. Leonardo dressed himself, and impressed vividly with his dream, he silently descended the staircase, and soon was in the fresh pure morning air. He thought for a few moments about the shortest way to the object he had in view, and having settled it in his mind, set out with nimble steps across the market-place, already peopled numerously. "If I can but see the building she is in," thought Leonardo, "she will seem nearer." The pace at which he proceeded soon brought him to the convent in question, and on perceiving the fortress-like walls which surrounded the garden, he felt what in the French language is well called a "*serrement de cœur.*" He walked round these before arriving at the entrance gates, and then he pictured to himself his poor Angela's feelings at entering there,—it was so like a prison.

Just at that moment a light country cart, laden with jars of milk, stopped at the gate; a peasant girl jumped down and tolled the massive bell. The portress opened the gate straightway, for it was a daily arrival. Leo-

nardo approached and peeped through the archway ; it was not so dismal as he expected, and the portress, though habited as a lay sister, was a chatty, merry soul, and had many a laugh with the peasant girl who carried in the milk. Happening to observe Leonardo, and seldom seeing so handsome a youth, or indeed any of the stronger sex at all, she nodded to him good-naturedly.

“ Buon giorno, what are you after ? A little curiosity to look inside here, eh ? Well, you have seen enough for once. Via ! I must shut the gate, and there’s the bell for matins.”

“ Nay, I am not very curious,” answered Da Vinci, putting on an unconcerned air ; “ but I wanted to ask you after the little ragazza del Verocchio, who entered last Friday ; a little thing so high, you must have seen her.”

“ To be sure ; I let her in,” replied the portress ; “ but I have not had a glimpse of her since ; no doubt she is very well, all the young ones are. I am sure they ought to be, they have little to do but to go to chapel and amuse themselves.”

“ Ah, well, thank you ; she is very happy, I dare say,” returned Da Vinci.

“ Happy as the day is long ! Addio !” and with that the gate was closed.

Leonardo felt somewhat comforted by having spoken of Angela to anybody, and he began to hope the convent was not quite inaccessible.

He now returned to his rotella. There were yet two hours before his attendance would be required at the school ; these he devoted to the exciting task of commencing his first painting. With what delight did he now arrange his colours, his brushes, and his design, using the former at first with a shy timidity, at which he was afterwards amused himself ; the moments fled faster than they had ever done before ; — was it possible the two hours were passed ?

Hastily collecting his materials he laid them aside, and with one long fixed look of scrutiny at his work, he ran off to the Maestro Verrocchio’s. Gasparo took but little notice of Da Vinci in spite of the interest Verrocchio had shown towards him the previous day ; but Leonardo was now so far accustomed to the life of the studio, and also perhaps sufficiently confident in his own powers, to be tolerably callous as to the treatment he received from his new master, while he revenged himself in his own

peculiar way for being slighted. He had already begun that practice which he continued all his life, of constantly carrying a pencil and little book, wherein he put down all the striking countenances or features he met with. Gasparo's physiognomy was drawn in every possible way, nor did the face of any one of the young artists escape; it was a common mode of warfare in all the studios, each party trying to render the portrait of his antagonist most repulsive, while preserving the likeness at the same time. Gasparo did not suffer this caricaturing with the same stoicism and good nature as the venerable Basilio, who on one occasion had actually abetted in rendering his own portrait more particularly ridiculous, to the great admiration of his pupils. On the day in question the hour of recreation was thus employed by Da Vinci, and the talent he exhibited in that branch of the art, considerably elevated him in the opinion of his fellow students. Da Vinci was not a youth to be kept in the background: his high spirit and good nature made him friends, while his talents commanded attention; and before three days were over, Gas-

paro no longer wondered that the Maestro should keep his eye upon his young pupil.

Those three days and a few succeeding ones were highly important to Leonardo in another way ; the rotella was during that time the object of all his energies ; the design once settled was not again altered in any way, but the colouring, the lights and shadows, were frequently changed before the young artist could satisfy himself. As soon as the day broke he was up and at work ; he forgot even to eat in his anxiety to complete this his first attempt ; and when at night he lay upon his little pallet bed, he could hardly sleep from thinking of this all-engrossing object ; — yet not alone of that, but of the vision of future works and success attendant on them, which his genius pictured to him ; and last, not least, of his incentive to greatness, his dear Angela.

In eight days he completed the painting, which was afterwards known and valued by the name of the “Rotella del Fico.”* It had been done entirely in secret for the reasons before mentioned ; and not even old Monica had had a glimpse of it.

* Afterwards sent to Milan.

When at last the boy felt sure that by re-touching he could not improve his work, yet having sufficient judgment to perceive that it lacked what it was not in his power to add, he turned away from it with something akin to disgust, that at present he could do no better. He was already impatient to get rid of it, and being pretty certain that it would answer the purpose of his father, partly from the subject he had chosen, and partly from its execution, he determined upon taking it to him at the first opportunity, when it should have become dry enough not to suffer in the transit.

A fête day soon afforded him time to execute this intention. He easily procured a seat in one of the rustic carts plying between the city and its environs, and was conveyed with his burden to a short distance of his father's house. How different were his feelings on now revisiting the valley, when Angela was no longer to be found there; his former interest in the Val d'Arno was turned upon Florence, for there he knew her to be, and the Villa Verocchio had no charms to attract him.

"The master is not at home," said one of the domestics, on perceiving Leonardo.

"It matters not," he replied; "I have brought this painting for him, and will leave it in his chamber." So saying he carried in the rotella, and commenced uncovering it carefully.

"Is this the young master's doing?" inquired the old woman, whose curiosity had led her to follow him. "Ugh!" she exclaimed on perceiving the painting, "è l diavolo!"

"Himself, Marturina," answered Da Vinci, smiling. "You could not think *I* should be painting such unhallowed things? Come to Florence, and you will find my room full of Madonnas and Saints."

"Ay, that is right, figliuolo," returned Marturina, still gazing with an expression of horror; "what a wicked imagination must have made out this monster!"

"Oh," said Leonardo, in a mysterious voice, "the painter doubtless saw the demon on some occasion, and thinks to make his fortune by the portrait."

"Saw him! di male in peggio!" exclaimed the pious Marturina. "Ah! what sinners there are! Holy Angels defend us!" so saying she departed to her culinary labours.

As Leonardo, laughing to himself, arranged

his painting in the proper light, he heard footsteps, and turning round perceived his step-mother attentively considering the rotella.

"My father is not at home, Signora?"

"No, nor will he be till the evening," replied Sabina. "Is this what was our beautiful piece of fig tree?" continued she, in the sarcastic tone she usually adopted towards her step-son.

"The very same," answered Leonardo, shortly.

"I cannot say it has been improved to my eye," remarked she; "but of course my judgment is worth nothing."

"No, Signora, it is *not* worth much; at all events till you use your own eyes, and cast away those of dislike and ill-will," replied Leonardo, turning round and looking at her while he spoke.

"You are plain spoken, young maestro, particularly in your father's absence," answered Sabina, growing violently red and angry; "but remember to whom you are speaking, for if you happen to forget now, I have the means of making you recollect it later."

"And you, Signora," rejoined Leonardo with coolness, "do not forget that your hus-

for a mass with six candles once a year, on the day he died — but what was I saying ? ”

That, the reader must leave the good woman to find out, for we are intent upon accompanying Da Vinci into Cornelia de' Medici's presence.

With a somewhat palpitating heart Leonardo found himself again traversing the grand quadrangle of the Medici Palace, and the stately halls of those merchant princes. But very different were his emotions of this day to those he had experienced on the previous occasion. Then, his fears were those of self-distrust ; now, they were caused by a kind of holy veneration with which Cornelia had impressed him ; and he was on the point of once more beholding her.

Arrived in the outer hall, he was embarrassed how to proceed, when a handsome youth, clad as a page, and in deep mourning, stepped forward, and inquired whether his name were Da Vinci. Upon Leonardo's affirmative answer, he said, “ I have orders to conduct you to my lady mistress, therefore follow me this way.”

So speaking, he pushed open a massive door

leading sideways from the entrance-hall to the suite of apartments in which Cornelia resided. As the two youths traversed the intermediate staircases and corridors, Leonardo inquired of his companion, "Has Madonna Cornelia, think you, recovered from the losses she has sustained? twelve months have elapsed since they occurred."

"Recovered — yes; at least she goes forth oftener from her chamber, and speaks less sadly, and sits much in company with the old Cosmo," returned the page; "but none who saw and knew her before her affliction can now find a trace of the bright happiness that beamed in her whole being at that time." The youth spoke so sadly, that Leonardo felt a hitherto unknown sensation creep over him for an instant; he was jealous; but his noble nature prevailed, and instantly crushing the unworthy thought, he said to himself: "What! would'st thou hide the sun from shining upon the whole world, or hate thy neighbour, because it gladdens his heart even as thine own?" However, he remained silent.

CHAP. IX.

IN this manner they came to the antechamber of Cornelia's apartments; and then the page, bidding Leonardo wait an instant, proceeded to announce his arrival to the lady. Leonardo felt glad to be alone for the short interval previously to entering Cornelia's presence, and he endeavoured to shake off the awkward timidity which restrained his natural demeanour. He had partly succeeded, when his guide again appeared.

"The Lady Cornelia commands your presence," said he; "I am to conduct you to her." Da Vinci followed the page in silence.

The first chamber they entered was the inner ante-room, occupied by two young women, the companions or attendants of Cornelia, who were working silver embroidery and chatting away the time. They gracefully acknowledged Da Vinci's salutation as he passed.

"That is the youngster who found our lady's locket," whispered the elder to her companion.

"And is he not the boy painter, whom the Maestro Pollajuolo wished to have in his school?" asked the younger.

"Ay, true!" replied the other; "and moreover he was rather bitter, methought, in remarking that Andrea Verocchio knew well what he was about; that his own merits would hardly carry his name into futurity, and that he takes good care to tack it on to those of his pupils who possess greater genius. Pietro del Pieve*, for example, who is but one-and-twenty, and ranks beside the heads of the schools of Florence; Verocchio, you know, early boasted of *him*; at least so said Pollajuolo, and now again this young Da Vinci promises to carry all before him."

"He is very handsome into the bargain," whispered the younger girl; "and, except our magnificent Lorenzo, I have seldom seen such high and courteous bearing in a youth."

"It is well you made the exception, Donna Isabel!" said a voice behind her; "else Lorenzo must have sought out your favourite to profit by his instruction!"

The two girls started at the well-known voice

* Perugino.

of Cosmo's grandson ; and when the customary compliments were over, they were not a little embarrassed at his participation in their conversation.

Lorenzo de' Medici was now in his sixteenth year, and already within the precincts of the palace had gained that appellation of "Magnificent," which was assigned to him later by the public voice. Bold towards his enemies, gentle to his friends, courteous and kind to all, Lorenzo was looked to with hope and admiration by the Florentines as a precious legacy of their beloved Cosmo ; and indeed the youth gave promise to become a fit successor to his venerable grandfather. His father, Pietro de' Medici, was still living it is true, but his declining health announced but too surely the approaching termination to his existence. Between Lorenzo and his relative Cornelia there existed great sympathy, for the youth was not exempt from feeling the influence she gained upon all around her ; and, in his case, their relationship enabled him to become thoroughly acquainted with her real worth. Scarcely a day passed, but the youth Lorenzo spent many hours of it with Cornelia, reading to her, or inditing poems

on subjects of mutual interest, his greatest wish being to win her attention from sorrowful reflections, and to recall, if possible, some of the sweet smiles which seemed fled for ever.

"Is the Lady Cornelia alone?" he inquired of Isabel, after a few trivial words.

"No, Signor," replied the damsel; "Donna Lucia is with her, and but a few minutes ago the young artist Da Vinci was ushered into her presence."

"I kiss your hand then, fair ladies," returned Lorenzo; "I must pay my respects to my lady aunt!" So saying, Lorenzo proceeded to Cornelia's reception-room. "Buona sera! cara zia!" he exclaimed, on entering the apartment; then kissed Cornelia's hand, bowed gracefully to the lady companion, and acknowledged Leonardo's courteous obeisance.

The latter, with modest demeanour, was standing near Cornelia, engaged apparently in a conversation which Lorenzo's entrance had interrupted. Cornelia herself was seated in a large carved and gilded chair; and beside her was a much older person, Donna Lucia di Bordon, whose benignant countenance was her chief attraction.

The chamber was less gorgeous than that inhabited by Cosmo, its elegance perhaps greater. The walls were adorned with frescoes from the hands of most of the best painters of the day; the ceiling, which was arched, was of a transparent blue, of such delicacy as to baffle the eye when desirous of discerning its actual limits. The floor was inlaid with rare and beautiful woods, its only covering being a magnificent leopard skin, upon which Cornelia's feet were then resting. The furniture of the apartment consisted chiefly of cushioned divans and marble tables, and on these was a profusion of flowers; the principal object, however, was a small raised pedestal, of an oblong shape, supporting what would seem to be a reclining figure executed in marble; but whether to restrain the curiosity of idle eyes, or to preserve the work from injury, it was concealed with a covering of rich purple velvet, which descended to the floor in graceful folds.

When Leonardo had cast his eyes round the chamber, he recognised instantly the contour of the hidden sculpture to be that of the infant Medici, and he longed to withdraw the veil which concealed the little image; but soon the

conversation which Cornelia commenced obliged him for a while to dismiss his enthusiasm.

Cornelia had not only been struck by the young Da Vinci's manner and appearance, but prepossessed in his favour also by the energetic tone of his feelings and the intellect which beamed in his dark eye. She felt a pleasure in becoming better acquainted with him, and hoped that her station and influence might prove of use to the rising artist, if his conduct were such as to warrant her countenance. So upon Leonardo presenting himself, she had essayed to divest the interview of all unnecessary formalities, addressing the boy in a manner which had indeed the desired effect of chasing away his timidity without lessening the respectful deference of his demeanour. She asked him different questions relative to his studies, his profession, and family, encouraging him both to give explicit answers and to remark freely upon those subjects, which Leonardo was not slow in doing ; but still he cautiously avoided mentioning Angela's name, until some fitting opportunity should present itself.

In the middle of Cornelia's inquiries arrived her nephew Lorenzo, and the conversation be-

came more general. Upon one of the tables was a small painting, and taking it up Lorenzo asked Da Vinci to tell from whose hand it came. Leonardo considered it for a short time, when Donna Lucia thinking he was perplexed, and wishing to relieve him from a painful embarrassment, interposed with—"Via, Signor Lorenzo! I will wager a ducat you do not know yourself! Come, let me look, perhaps I am better acquainted with the picture."

Lorenzo smiled. "Donna Lucia," said he, "has I see more ducats than she knows what to do with, and would take the merit of naming the picture to herself. But, look you, Signora," he continued, catching up his cap, in which a rich jewel enclasped the plume adorning it, "this brilliant against your ducat, that our Maestro here will know sooner than any of us."

"Nay, Lorenzo," interposed Cornelia, smiling, "I will have no wagering or idle squanderers here; you can go elsewhere to dash about jewels when you are weary of them, but Donna Lucia finds food, I know, for too many, to have ducats to spare for jests. Come, Leonardo, what think you of the picture?"

"Oh, lady," replied Da Vinci, colouring

deeply at thus openly giving his opinion, "what I can say would not add or take away one iota of the merits of Giotto's work; besides it is beyond criticism, and it is but a sign of ignorance to find a defect. If I am not mistaken, Giotto painted this picture to surprise and give pleasure to the venerable Cimabue."

"In which he fully succeeded, I should think," added Lorenzo.

"Yes, Signor," replied Da Vinci; "the next day he was set to paint the frescoes in the church of Santa Croce!"

At that instant the door of the chamber was slowly opened, and one of Cosmo's attendants presented himself to acquaint Lorenzo that his father and grandfather were on their way to the council chamber, and desired him to join them.

Lorenzo kissed Cornelia's hand, and whispered that he should return shortly; then quickly saluted Donna Lucia and Da Vinci, and left the apartment.

Leonardo had been attentively examining the well known painting of Giotto, and picturing to himself the satisfaction the boy must have experienced in preparing so great a sur-

prise for his friend and master, Cimabue. These thoughts engrossed him completely for a few minutes, and he started as if ashamed of his reverie, when Cornelia thus addressed him:—

“ If I rightly understood you, Leonardo, your own relations are not themselves imbued with the love and skill for Art which Verocchio thought to discover in you, and it was in his house, and not at your father’s, that you began to evince a taste for painting; Verocchio, therefore, is your best and greatest friend in Florence, is he not?”

Da Vinci was sore embarrassed at this inquiry, to answer which correctly a long explanation would be necessary; he remained a moment in perplexity, and then replied:—

“ In truth, lady, I cannot tell you whether the Maestro be my friend at heart or not, but I know for certain that there is in Florence one who loves me better than he does.”

“ And who is that one person?” asked Cornelia; “ I should have hardly supposed you could doubt that your master is your best friend; but perhaps you can explain that.”

Leonardo was greatly tempted to open and confide to Cornelia all the hidden hopes, and

fears, and anxieties of his heart: had he been with her alone, he would doubtless have given way to this feeling, but the presence of Donna Lucia acted as a restraint upon the gushing fountain of sympathy, so that he repelled his desire and answered:—

“Lady, she who loves me so well is called Angela: she is two years younger than I am, and though now in Florence, is as far as a hundred leagues away, for she is in a convent,—Santa Rosa del Monte.”

While Da Vinci was speaking, Donna Lucia approached nearer.

“Santa Rosa del Monte!” said she; “is your little friend then named Angela del Verocchio?” And before Leonardo could reply, “Do you not remember?” continued she to Cornelia.

“Angela—yes, that was the name. Madalena, you know, spoke to me last Sunday of the little Verocchio, the Maestro’s daughter.”

“Yes, lady,” said Da Vinci, speaking with trepidation, “Angela is the Maestro’s daughter.”

Cornelia seemed for an instant puzzled; but the sad expression which she now perceived upon the youth’s countenance, led her to guess at least part of the truth. “If Angela, then,”

said she, “is in the convent, you cannot see her except by express permission.”

“The Maestro,” replied Da Vinci, “has placed Angela where I should neither see her, nor she me; therefore it is not likely he would grant us permission to meet, even if it were asked, which it never will be.” And Leonardo’s lip quivered as he finished speaking, for his secret was out; then taking courage, he turned an anxious eye to Donna Lucia, and continued: “Signora, is Angela well?—is she happy?”

Donna Lucia was in the act of unravelling a ball of silk for her embroidery, and looking up at her questioner, she let it roll down on the floor. Da Vinci sprang forward to pick it up, but when he had given it into her hand, he unconsciously remained half kneeling at her side, while his countenance brightened, and he repeated, “Is Angela happy, Signora?”

“From what my niece Madalena said, my young Master,” returned Donna Lucia, in her usual slow and precise manner, “I conclude that your little friend is very contented; and that although at first she cried and moped, as all children do on leaving home, she soon got

over it ; and tells Sister Madalena she does not wish to go back, because she loves her so very much."

"Whom, Signora, whom does she love?" inquired Leonardo, absently, as he rose and retired a few steps.

"My good and pious niece, the Sister Madalena," replied Donna Lucia; "and well she may!" added she to herself.

"Yes," interposed Cornelia, who, for the last few minutes, had been studying Leonardo's countenance with deep interest,—"yes, Madalena is ever an object of love; Angela Verocchio has doubtless found in her a loving sister, if not more."

Da Vinci stood silent with his eyes on the ground. He had received a new impression, which circumstances tended to render painful; Angela loved another *besides* himself. He was angry with himself for feeling thus, for he perceived, on analysing his thoughts, that he should have been better pleased if Angela were still unhappy. From this meditation he was aroused by Cornelia's voice.

"How long is it," asked she, "that you have known Angela Verocchio?"

The question seemed a strange one to the boy.
“How long, lady?” he repeated,—“always.
I do not remember when we were not together.”

“And now,” continued Cornelia, “the Maestro wishes to break your intimacy; is it not so? It displeases him.”

Da Vinci was silent, but Cornelia could perceive that she had judged rightly.

“I am grieved at this,” she continued; “but you must strive to become Verocchio’s equal as an artist, and meanwhile win his heart by your good conduct and perseverance. You must think, too, that you would never render Angela happy if her father were displeased with both of you.”

“I cannot stoop, lady,” answered Leonardo, quickly raising his eyes to Cornelia, and as soon dropping them again. “I love Angela more than her father does. I have nothing else but her to love. I have loved her as long as I can remember, and now I cannot—I will not ask leave to do so!”

“Your mother is, I think, dead,” said Cornelia.

“I never knew her, Signora,” replied Da Vinci.

"Because," continued Cornelia, "had you not lost her, she would have taught you that you can *stoop* only to do *wrong*. The act of doing what is right, will of itself raise all the nobler qualities."

Leonardo was little accustomed to reproof, and even from Cornelia de' Medici he felt the sting of censure; but, on casting a look towards her, he was so struck by the expression of affectionate interest displayed on her countenance and in her soft eyes, that of a sudden his natural warm feelings kindled within him; a tear swam in his eye, and fearful of exposing his weakness, he respectfully, but hastily, kissed Cornelia's hand, bowed to Donna Lucia, and saying, "Pardon me, lady, it is time I should withdraw," was about to retire, when Cornelia gave him a sign to stop.

"This painting," she said, taking up Giotto's work, "is yours; I wish you to accept it from me; I know you will value it, for Giotto's works are rare, and this one has an interest of its own. *Your* first painting may perhaps some day, you know, be handed to posterity," added she, smiling; "but when it *is* painted, you must consider it *mine*."

gone years? Let me carry it, figliuolo, you will have time enough to enjoy it." So saying he walked on, keeping his eyes fixed on the painting.

Leonardo was glad the old man was so engrossed, for he himself was in a thoughtful humour, and not disposed for conversation. In this way they arrived at Monica's house. Basilio took up the picture to Leonardo's room, arranged it in the right light, and sat down in front of it; Leonardo mechanically busied himself in cleaning and putting away the painting materials he had used for the rotella, thinking meanwhile that it was perhaps a pity he had chosen such an eccentric subject for his first attempt, as it certainly would not please Cornelia de' Medici. He then repeated all she had said to him; thought upon the interest she evinced as to his career; her sentiments regarding Verocchio, Angela, and himself; her sweet calm look and voice, and her exquisite beauty. Then he hoped and wished fervently that she might once see Angela at the convent, for he was confident she would love her and be kind to her.

From this reverie he was startled by a deep

sigh, proceeding from Basilio, who had risen, and was preparing to depart, but whose eyes were still half turned towards Giotto's painting.

"Good night, Leonardo," said he, "mind and do not move the picture; the light was perfect, though now it is too dark to see anything. Stay, with a lamp, what an effect there would be!"

To resist trying the experiment was impossible. Basilio struck a light, and Leonardo's little lamp was soon burning; the old man knelt before the picture, holding the light in one hand, and arranging the board with the other.

"So,—a little more—that is right; do you see the richness the yellow light throws over it? The twilight was too blue; I see it now. How warm, how heavenly the Madonna is! —and the blue mantle, does it not absolutely *float* around her?"

Da Vinci stood behind Basilio, gazing upon the illuminated picture, and the old man's enthusiasm kindled the sympathetic zeal which was slowly developing itself in the young artist; but already *his* eye, mind, and imagination soared above the range of any master,

friend, you might now care to know you have lost one."

Then, turning to the painting, "Unlucky gem," he exclaimed, "to have existed two hundred years to come to this!" He then looked round for his hat, intending to depart, and waste no more words on his ungrateful pupil; but Leonardo, in order to detain him, had slipped the cap in question into his closet.

"Caro Maestro," he began, "you are not going in anger. Come, listen to me."

Basilio was searching in vain for his cap, and took no notice of Da Vinci.

"Maestro," repeated Leonardo, taking the lamp to look at Basilio, and putting on one of those bewitching smiles which every one found irresistible,— "I don't believe one word you have said; you are still my best friend, Maestro, and you may scold me at any hour of the day, or all day long, so that you remain so."

"Where is the confounded cap?" muttered Basilio.

"You are not going yet, so you don't want it," replied Leonardo; "you would not leave me in anger, I know, nor — the supper that Monica is bringing!"

"*Boy!*" exclaimed Basilio, whose firmness had to be supported by a great effort, "I am going, and if not with my hat, most decidedly without it."

"Oh, I should be sorry for that, Maestro," replied Da Vinci, with sudden solemnity fetching the cap from its concealment, "the dews are falling heavily."

Basilio took the cap, but as he put it on, his eyes met Leonardo's, and after a grim frown, he burst out laughing. "You rascal!" he exclaimed, "you are made to be spoilt, but beware the next time you make me angry."

"It shall never happen again, Maestro," returned Da Vinci; "I will henceforward swear by Giotto to please you, and utter no criticism until —" then checking himself by laying his finger on his lip, he added, "No, I must not say *that!*"

Basilio soon after departed homewards.

The next morning the young Da Vinci had already been an hour at work at his easel before any of his companions arrived, for he intended devoting the afternoon to a trip to his father's

house, in order to obtain back the painting ; and to accomplish this without neglecting his usual day's occupation, he had risen considerably earlier. He was therefore at liberty shortly after the hour of repose had expired, and putting away his work, he saluted Gasparo, and left the studio.

"What can take Da Vinci away to-day?" muttered the Maestro ; "it is the first time to my knowledge that he has missed Verocchio's round."

Meanwhile Leonardo's buoyant step soon brought him near the street where he intended to provide himself with a horse or mule for his little journey ; but before arriving there, his plan of action was suddenly changed by circumstances he had not foreseen.

Filippo Resi's stall was directly in the line of road Leonardo had chosen through the town, and now, as usual, the awning which sheltered the front of the open shop protected also a group of eager admirers of the works of art displayed beneath.

Leonardo could never pass this tempting emporium of Art without at least a quick glance at the pictures exhibited ; so raising himself on

tiptoe above the shoulder of a tall man who seemed deeply engrossed with something within the stall, he looked for some new object of interest. But his first glance gave him such sudden and intense astonishment, that for a moment he felt uncertain whether or not he were dreaming ; for in the interior of Filippo's shop, upon an easel, was his own rotella, and around it were the painters Pollajuolo, Filippo Lippi, Alessandro Filipepi, with others of the profession, and several of the rich Florentine patrons of Art.

Filippo Resi himself, his eyes glistening with delight from beneath his dark shaggy brows, was in the midst, now remarking upon some peculiarity of the picture, now watching the countenances of those who were examining it, and every now and then giving the following answer to the inquiries of some new comer :—

“ When did I get it, Signor, and where ? Why, it dropped upon me from the skies not three hours ago ! Here I was dozing in the heat with one eye open, when in comes a man,—I don't know what his name is, but I know him by sight,—says he, ‘ I have an old picture here that I want to know something about.’ ‘ An

old picture is it?' said I, expecting to see some unnatural daub. 'Yes,' said he, 'and what do you think of it?' and with that he brought it forth. When I saw it, per Bacco! my heart leaped into my mouth, and I believe I stood a good five minutes staring at it, for my man grew impatient at last; then I saw that I had been a fool, for he must have seen what I thought of it, and I quaked for fear lest he should take it away. So I turned round and laughed, and said, 'You rogue, to call that an old picture! Why it is hardly yet dry, and I'll wager my beard the brush that has done this is still stiff with the colour.' So upon that my friend became very red, and admitted he was at the wrong end of the stick, and begged me to put a value upon it, and if it suited me to take it off his hands. I was in such fear of losing it by bidding too little, and of letting the man into the secret by saying too much, that I was well puzzled, so I asked by whom it was, because a work without a name was a dead weight in such business as mine; he replied that he could not tell me who was the artist; that all he wanted was to get an opinion about the piece, and if it was worth his while he would part with it. I clearly

saw that he affected ignorance and expected me to pay handsomely, so I at last said I would give fifty ducats down for the thing; at which he looked me full in the face, as if to see if I were in earnest to offer so little, and to cut the matter short I said, ‘Well, take a hundred ducats, for *I* can give you no more, whatever you ask.’ So off he went without saying anything, and left me my prize; and anybody may say what he thinks of it.”

Da Vinci, who had squeezed himself into a corner under the awning, listened in a trance of pleasure and surprise to all that Filippo recounted: but it was almost impossible for him to believe that the enthusiasm he witnessed was occasioned by what he himself had done; it seemed rather that he had another self, one who could bear such praise without becoming giddy, one who could look forward to greater merit, one who could never rest satisfied with mere applause. But at the same time, the unexpected success of the rotella, the undisguised admiration and astonishment it called forth from those who were the judges of Florence in such matters, could not but infuse into the boy-painter a glow of confidence in the talent which,

unaided, could produce such a result. He felt an assurance that his dreams would now give place to realities, that his works would be known, and that the name of LEONARDO DA VINCI would be handed by them to posterity. In one short quarter of an hour Da Vinci had gained years; he now estimated his own talent without wavering; he was confident of success, if the power of perseverance did not forsake him. Long had he wished to be assured of this; many a time had he anxiously analysed his own capabilities; but never till now had the conviction of his talent so thoroughly impressed itself on his mind. At first it was a pleasurable sensation, but soon it assumed a more important character; there arose a kind of responsibility before him. How much had he not to learn, how many years of study and practice would there not be yet required, to reach the point he aimed at? These were considerations outweighing the vanity which Filippo had excited.

In the midst of these thoughts, which agitated Leonardo's mind like a troubled sea, and came and went in far less time than it takes to describe them, Pollajuolo, who had been examining the rotella with great attention, turned round to his companion Filipepi, and said, "I

believe it is young Pietro del Pieve's work after all, and he has disposed of it in this manner to feel his way in a new style."

"Pietro del Pieve!" exclaimed Filipepi, "he could not have done this, Maestro, except by borrowing another hand. Why, there is a force and breadth in this design which would sooner belong to —, and be you sure it has been sent from Milan to perplex Florence."

"Ah, Signori," interposed Filippo, rubbing his hands, "you may seek to match it by any style you like, but you will not succeed, I promise you. This is a new style, a new school, a new hand, a new idea; and, Signori, I will take upon myself to say that whoever has done this, will astonish us some day more than this morning; for myself, Signori, if I were one of you, I should look through my pupils to see if perchance the rotella painter were amongst them."

"I wish he were, Filippo," answered Pollajuolo, smiling; but Filipepi said in a decided tone, "Tush! that is no boy's hand."

One of the rich amateurs present now inquired what Resi demanded as its price.

"Two hundred ducats, Signor, not one less!"

answered the old picture-dealer. "Why, Heaven preserve you ! when this has a name, and it is twenty years old, I should be afraid to say what it will fetch. But I care not to part with it, Signor ; when I do it will not be difficult. Ah ! buon giorno," he exclaimed to a new comer, who was Andrea del Verocchio, "walk in, Signor, I have something worth your looking at to-day." And then the history of the picture was once more repeated.

Verocchio, after saluting the persons present, remained looking at the rotella with no small interest, and Da Vinci took the opportunity of concealing himself at the corner of the stall, where he could hear all that was spoken and remain himself unseen, for he was not a little curious to know the Maestro's opinion. Verocchio listened to Resi's account with now and then a smile, and then said, "You have had a good morning's work, Filippo ; if you like I will engage Cosmo to take this off your hands."

"No, Maestro," returned Resi, wriggling to and fro ; "Cosmo has not sight now to value anything like this. I shall not part with it, methinks, or at all events, not till I have found its name."

"Where could I have seen a touch like this?" muttered Verocchio, half aloud; "there is in it something that I seem to recognise, but which is almost hidden by the colouring."

"I hold it to be Pietro del Pieve's," interposed Pollajuolo.

"And I think it comes from the Milanese school," added Filipepi.

"What think you of its being an old Masaccio retouched?" asked Filippo Lippi.

"Or a second Giotto?" added Resi, slyly.

"Is there then no mark or sign behind, by which we can learn something?" asked Verocchio, impatiently.

Resi turned the rotella, and all eyes were directed towards it. "There is nothing," said Resi, sorrowfully. "Stay, what is this? Ah! only the grain of the wood; no, surely here *is* something, but it is scarcely more than the scratch of a pen, and my eyes cannot make it out; a B or a P."

"Give it me, Resi," exclaimed Verocchio, snatching the rotella from the old man, and examining it with the utmost scrutiny. "Diavolo! is it possible?" he muttered; "Pietro—Pietro—da—Pietro da Vinci!" A flush of superb

triumph rose upon Verocchio's countenance as he uttered the name, then giving back the rotella to Resi, who received it with mouth and eyes wide open, he said, with a lofty air, "That is painted by my pupil, Leonardo da Vinci!"

While Verocchio had been examining the rotella, Leonardo, who was quite ignorant of the mark on the back of the board, had rather enjoyed the perplexity of his elders, but no sooner did he hear the discovery that was made, than overwhelmed with the prospect of his newly earned fame, without waiting to listen to the expressions of surprise which followed Verocchio's announcement, he hastily withdrew from his hiding-place, ran with his utmost speed down the street, and did not stop until obliged by want of breath. In so doing he found himself near the Medici Palace, and then for the first time recollecting that that evening he had promised to take his painting to Cornelia.

It was evidently impossible for him to fulfil this promise by regaining possession of the rotella; so, upon the spur of the moment, he advanced towards the palace with the idea of communicating this disappointment to his lovely

patroness ; but of a sudden he again stopped, for could *he* explain the difficulty to Cornelia ? Would it not be the height of arrogant conceit to be the first to inform her of the value of his work, and that it only could be obtained by favour for a large sum ? This consideration caused Da Vinci to turn abruptly on his steps, though whither to direct them he knew not, for the idea of returning to the studio and there meeting the Maestro, was insupportable ; so little had Leonardo been yet accustomed to receive the well-earned encomiums of his talent. He slowly withdrew himself into the narrow and less frequented streets of the city, and at last, after an hour, found he had wandered into the open country.

The sun was setting gorgeously, illuminating the hundred steeples of Florence, and gilding every object with its rays. Da Vinci gained a little hillock, upon which stood a group of magnificent chesnut trees, and throwing himself on the grass, enjoyed the calmness of the scene. The hum of the city scarcely reached him, the stillness of the evening was typified by the glassy surface of the blue Arno, which gently washed the foot of the hillock. The young artist felt

the soothing influence of the soft colours which lay stretched before him ; the excitement of the previous hours gradually gave place to the natural energy of his character, so much so, that at last he was almost ashamed of having been excited at all, and recollecting that he had himself been *dissatisfied* with the rotella ; that he had looked upon it with disgust, had turned from it discouraged, and had pictured to himself far greater power of conception and execution. And an hour ago had it not been deemed wonderful ? Did not Filipepi's words still ring in his ears, that no boy's hand had painted it ? And Verocchio, had he not himself proposed that Cosmo de' Medici should purchase it ? "I was a fool just now," thought Da Vinci ; "I imagined the Maestri had raised me, but I was as high before. If they be already astonished, what would they say could they but see in here ?" and he tapped his forehead with a little stick he held in his hand ; then after a minute or two he started up, "I see now," he exclaimed, "I will be above them, even should I never surpass them !" And resuming the road, he sauntered towards home, but the moon shone brightly before he arrived there.

At an early hour on the following morning, Leonardo lay awake upon his bed, watching the advance of the sun upon the wall of the room, and using the vigour of thought obtained from sleep to decide upon the design for a picture to be presented to Cornelia de' Medici. He had partly succeeded, when his attention was diverted by the sound of footsteps on the staircase; they approached hurriedly, stopped at the door, and the next instant Basilio burst into the chamber half out of breath, but his countenance shining with delight. On perceiving Da Vinci, he rushed to him, half suffocated him with an embrace, and exclaimed—

“The devil has helped you, Da Vinci, or if not, you are the luckiest rogue that the sun has yet shone on! And here you are lying dreaming, and I have been counting the hours to come to you, and tell you what is enough to turn an older head than yours. Ouf! I have well nigh lost my breath upon that villainous staircase!”

“What news can have brought you out so early, Maestro?” demanded Leonardo, in a surprised tone, “and moreover, with your coat on inside out?”

"Inside out! Ay, true. But never mind," resumed Basilio, looking at the garment in question, "what has happened, think you? Ugh! you can never guess. I must tell you, I see. Well, the old Resi in the Strada Nova —"

"Has got a peep-show for the great masters of Florence, is it not so?" interposed Leonardo; "and he paid a hundred ducats for it, and does not know he might have bought it for one. Clever Resi!"

"What! you know all about it!" exclaimed Basilio, considerably disappointed and surprised. "What a boy it is! Why, where were you then yesterday?"

"In several places," answered Leonardo, smiling, while he dressed himself; "and I saw my rotella stuck up in Resi's stall."

"You *did* then paint it, figliuolo!" exclaimed the old man. "I could have sworn it. Ah! if I had but seen it before—to have first seen your first work, Leonardo!" And thus speaking, Basilio sat himself down on the bed, took a long pinch of snuff, and remained steadfastly gazing at his pupil, as if until now he had never fully estimated his right value.

"You shall see the *second* at all events, Maestro," replied Da Vinci; "but now let us go; it is already late, I see, by the shadow on the wall."

Basilio smiled as he slyly answered, "Ah, you are impatient."

"Yes, Maestro," replied Leonardo, with emphasis, "I am impatient to prove myself no fool. Do you not think my head is to be turned? Does not Verocchio? Well, you will know me better."

They descended the staircase together silently, but Basilio at last drew forth his handkerchief and privately wiped his eyes, muttering to himself, "I said so from the first, that is a true artist born; Nature's gift—Nature's gift!"

When Leonardo entered the studio, he found his companions in a cluster together, discussing the topic of the rotella, for a few hours had sufficed to spread the fame of it throughout Florence, and especially through the various studios of painting. The young artists were vociferous in their inquiries of Da Vinci as to every detail concerning it, when the arrival of Gasparo reduced the noisy throng to order.

Leonardo drew forth his work without re-

garding Gasparo's half-obsequious manner towards him, but he had hardly commenced drawing before a young painter entered with a message from Verocchio to the effect that he desired Da Vinci's presence in his own studio. Conscious that the rotella was the cause of this summons, our young artist obeyed with some slight trepidation, but he soon overcame it from the desire to appear unembarrassed before his master.

As he entered Verocchio's studio, the painter was standing in a reverie before one of his own works ; there was a dissatisfied expression on his face as he turned abruptly upon hearing the door open.

" Ah, I wish to say a few words to you, Da Vinci. So you have been painting, eh, before you have learned to know black from white, or blue from green ? Ah, well ; I have seen your picture, and am glad you have so much invention. The colouring, too, was certainly original, if nothing else ; and, at all events, as you seem to want to dabble in colours, I wish you to be in that studio there," pointing to the next chamber, " that I may look after your vagaries myself."

The half-joking, half-serious tone Verocchio assumed, was a great contrast to his manner of the previous day at Filippo Resi's, and proved to Leonardo how differently the Maestro spoke *of* him and *to* him ; this was, however, fast becoming a matter of indifference to the boy, and he prepared to retire without reply, when Verocchio continued :—

“ This must be the last public experiment of your brush, Da Vinci, while you are my scholar, you understand ? ”

“ It is not by *my* wish, Signor,” replied Leonardo, somewhat haughtily, “ that any one has seen the rotella besides my father, who desired me to paint it ; but since he has chosen to part with it, I am anxious to paint some small thing for the Lady Cornelia de' Medici, in lieu of that which she cannot now receive from me.”

“ The Lady Cornelia ! ” repeated Verocchio, in a tone of half angry surprise, which he, however, essayed partly to conceal ; “ she is doubtless ignorant of the position of student artists.” Then softening his tone, he continued, “ However, I will pass it over this once, Da Vinci, but shall rely upon your making no more attempts after this second one.”

"You may, Signor," answered Leonardo, pleased at the Maestro's concession, although he felt it was made to the name of the Medici; and then saluting him, he retired to the adjoining studio.

On finding himself in the midst of Verocchio's advanced pupils, all of whom were verging upon manhood, and none of fewer years than eighteen, Leonardo for a moment felt pleasure at already taking his place among them; but this little vanity soon gave way before his true love of Art, and the eagerness with which he entered into his employment. In this studio there was no maestro besides Verocchio himself, and therefore, in this first day of Da Vinci's introduction, he saw more of his master than during his whole previous pupilage; but except in the routine of instruction, there was very little communication between them, although Verocchio evidently showed more interest in the progress of Leonardo than in that of his older pupils; a circumstance which at first gained the boy no friends among his fellow artists. Their displeasure, however, soon gave way before his modest, unassuming, but lofty bearing.

When the hour of dispersion arrived, and

Leonardo laid aside his palette, he bethought himself of his neglected promise to Cornelia; so, trusting that by some means or other she might have become aware of the rotella's existence, he decided upon presenting himself before her, to beg her acceptance of his second attempt. Accordingly, after a careful revisal of his dress (upon which Leonardo generally bestowed tolerable attention), he slowly proceeded to the palace, revolving in his mind the various ideas to be developed in the projected painting.

CHAP. XI.

LEONARDO found no difficulty in being admitted to Cornelia's apartments, and when ushered into the antechamber, Donna Isabel herself went to announce the visitor to her mistress, while Donna Livia, her companion, entered into conversation with him. From her he would have wished to learn whether or not the rotella had been mentioned within the palace, but he gained nothing on this point, Donna Livia merely speaking of general matters, and in a short time Isabel returned; there was a slight smile on her countenance as she motioned Da Vinci to follow her.

Cornelia was in the same apartment as on the former occasion, but Donna Lucia was not with her, the youth Lorenzo being her only companion. She looked at Leonardo in a half-smiling, half-reproachful way, as he entered.

"What, Da Vinci," said she, "is it thus you keep your promise, and to a lady? Me-thinks there can hardly be good reasons for your forgetfulness!"

"Madonna," replied Leonardo, with far more

embarrassment than was his wont, “you have indeed cause to be displeased with me, although it was by no fault of mine that yesterday I failed in obeying your honoured commands; but, Madonna, I was hasty in promising what it is proved I cannot perform. To my deep regret, my father, lady, had already parted with my unlucky picture when I would have brought it you; and now, I can only offer a second one for your acceptance, which perhaps may be better worthy of its high destination.”

“But is it then impossible to regain the other?” inquired Cornelia; “would not your second painting be a fit exchange for the first one to the person who has it now? I cannot so lightly give up my right to your work, Leonardo, which I had fancied already my own property.”

“Oh, lady,” replied Da Vinci, “your name were enough, methinks, to bring you the choicest of all precious things, much more my poor picture; but I fear its present owner is rather eccentric, and the subject of the painting being so likewise, it is after his own heart, and he might prove unmannerly as to parting with it.”

As Leonardo finished speaking, the youth Lorenzo, who had been standing gazing out of

the window, turned quickly round. "What," said he, "would Filippo Resi say to that?"

Leonardo, at these words, became suffused with crimson; and, although he would gladly have cast his eyes on the ground, he felt obliged to face his confusion, in order, if possible, to ascertain whether Cornelia were aware of the fate of the rotella; then, after a few moments, "Filippo Resi, Signor," said he, "would understand me."

"Because, perhaps," rejoined Lorenzo, slyly, "his is an eccentricity which gives way before a few hundred ducats or so."

Leonardo began an embarrassed reply, in which however he was interrupted by Cornelia.

"So, old Filippo Resi purchased your picture from your father?" said she, smiling; "that fact must have given at once a value to your work, Leonardo. Filippo Resi is held a keen connoisseur. I had not, in truth, imagined you to have already advanced so far, and we must see whether fair words will not prevail with Resi in my cause."

While Cornelia had been speaking, Leonardo had remained with a blushing face, his eyes on the ground, and his thoughts confused.

"Signora," said he, with hesitation, "Signora, with your permission, I will go to Filippo Resi—and will propose—I mean I will tell him of your wish. It must be, at all events, an honour to him to comply with any one of yours, lady. I will go instantly, with your permission, Madonna!"

Lorenzo turned again from his musing attitude. "That will be lost trouble, Da Vinci," said he; "Resi has parted with the picture."

"Parted with it already!" exclaimed Leonardo.

"Yes, young Maestro," rejoined Lorenzo, while Cornelia, rising slowly, drew aside the hangings of a high screen, and exhibited to the astonished boy his famed rotella.

"You see," said Cornelia, "your picture came hither before you. Filippo Resi parted with it, however, as a favour I am told."

"Ah, Madonna," exclaimed Leonardo, after a moment's silence, "this monster was but to surprise my father; I would have painted a very different subject, could I have imagined to whom it would belong."

"Nay, Leonardo," replied Cornelia, "whatever had been the subject of your first picture,

dered from the right staircase, and must retrace his steps ; this he did, and soon found himself again near Cornelia's apartments, where he stopped to recall to mind how the page had conducted him on the previous occasion.

A moment had not thus elapsed before he observed one of the adjacent doors open softly and slowly, as if pushed by some one behind who wished neither to be seen nor heard. Nobody, however, appeared ; and the noise made by Leonardo unintentionally letting fall his cap, caused the door to be rapidly closed again.

“ Whoever this may be,” thought Da Vinci, “ need not be afraid of me, for all I want to know is the way out ; let me see if this window into the court-yard will show me by which corner I entered.”

He accordingly went a few paces to the window, but soon perceived it looked on to one of the smaller courts, and not the great quadrangle. No one was to be seen, and every thing was quiet save the trickling fountains below. Leonardo consequently moved on again, resolved to descend the first staircase he should find, when his attention was again attracted by

the opening of another door, and in the same noiseless and cautious manner as before ; it remained a few inches ajar for a minute or two, and perhaps the person might then have ventured forth, but at that instant the trampling of horses' feet in the courtyard announced some arrival at the palace, and the door was again rapidly closed.

Da Vinci now bethought him what could thus cause these sudden symptoms of fear on the part of any one in the apartments of the Medici ; it was at least to be regarded as strange, and led to suspicion of the motives which could have brought there at all an individual so unwilling to be seen ; in any case such a circumstance should be made known to Cornelia's attendants, and to do this Leonardo determined to wait a little where he was until one or other of them should return. He looked out into the court below, but there were only a few grooms leading away their masters' horses, which Da Vinci observed to be covered with foam and dust.

He then returned to the door of the antechamber, and sat down upon a bench provided for the attendants in waiting. Ten minutes

elapsed, and still the palace was completely silent. "Cosmo is not yet dead," thought Da Vinci, "or the great bell would have tolled; at least Basilio, I recollect, said so one day when Sua Grandezza was reported to be ill. Ha! what is that again?"

Leonardo perceived a movement in a door at a little distance from the two others. It was evident that this ante-chamber was the only outlet from Cornelia's apartments, and that some one was an unwilling prisoner. Da Vinci neither moved nor breathed, hoping that no untoward noise might prevent his discovering who was thus timid if innocent.

The huge door moved slowly on its hinges — there was a pause — nothing was to be heard; the door was pushed a little farther, and then, most slowly and cautiously, at a much lower level than that taken by Leonardo's eyes, there appeared a golden lock of hair, another, part of a small head, a corner of the appertaining forehead, a delicate eyebrow, and bright blue — surely they were Angela's!

Leonardo could not at once believe it; but with his eyes fixed upon the charming countenance thus so unexpectedly thrust through the door-

way, he reflected back on his own face the surprise and incredulous expression depicted upon that of Angela.

But this was not a state of things to last long. "Leone! Leone!!" exclaimed Angela, "is it possible!" and, pushing open the door with a great effort, she sprang towards him with the most overpowering delight. Leonardo, on his part, felt nothing less than that Angela had fallen from the skies, for that she could ever leave the convent had not once entered his mind as possible. He embraced her unconsciously with more affection, if we could call it so, than ever before, and it was not until several minutes had passed that either could speak about their unexpected meeting; then, upon Leonardo recounting the suspicions she had caused him by the mysterious opening and shutting of the doors, Angela, on her side explained how she had been left alone by the Lady Cornelia, and afterwards by the other two donne, and that out of sheer loneliness she had wished to peep out into the corridors and seek some amusement: then they both laughed at their mutual mistakes.

Leonardo now asked how Angela had come

there,—a question that Angela was on the point of applying to Leonardo; she could only tell him that the Lady Cornelia had two days before visited the convent, and had sent for her and asked if she would like to come and see her, and that very morning Donna Lucia came and took her away, by permission of the Abbess, to pass the day with the Lady Cornelia.

“And has the Signora ever spoken of me to you?” asked Leonardo.

“Never!” answered Angela; “but now I know she is kind to you too, I will relate to her how we love one another, and then she will always tell me all she knows.”

Leonardo shook his head. “No, she will not, Angela! But never mind, do not speak of that; let me hear about the convent, and— and — what is her name? — one of the sisters whom you love very much.”

“That must be Sister Madalena,” replied Angela, “for I care for none but her; and I have talked to her of you, and every one—of Aunt Placida — and my father.”

“And what did Sister Madalena say?” inquired Leonardo.

Angela coloured a little: “Shall I repeat to

you what she has told me, Leone? She says I must obey my father in every thing; and that people who act rightly are always happy. And Sister Madalena is so good and loving, I have promised her to do all she says, and try to be like her."

Leonardo listened to Angela with a dim feeling that she was repeating Cornelia's words. The short time she had been in the convent had added something to her apparent age; there was less childishness, but it had in no way lessened the beautiful guileless expression of countenance which had ever distinguished her; and now that with this there shone the first glimmerings of a high and fixed principle of action, Da Vinci felt that he could no longer look down and smile upon the simplicity of his former playmate.

But although these thoughts were pleasurable, they led to a short silence, Leonardo merely gazing on Angela with eloquent affection, and she playfully pulling asunder his curly hair, as was her habit in days past.

From this pause, however, they were suddenly startled by the deep sound of the great bell of the Medici chapel.

“Cosmo de’ Medici is dead, then!” exclaimed Leonardo, as the ponderous sound fell heavily again upon the air, and in a few moments was responded to from the Campanile and the other belfries of Florence.

“Who, Leone?” asked Angela in a whisper, as she perhaps unconsciously crept somewhat closer to her companion; “I heard Donna Livia say something of an old man dying.”

“It is the Lady Cornelia’s father-in-law,” replied Da Vinci: “let us go to the window looking into the court; I hear the clattering of the horses again; perhaps there are messengers despatched.”

This supposition was true, and from the window they saw several horsemen, with badges of deep mourning, mount and depart; some of these had iron countenances, not to be moved by either joy or sorrow, but others there were who disdained not to shed a tear for their good lord, Cosmo, who, as “father of his country,” had been to them a parent.

“Are not they sad?” whispered Angela; “that is perhaps because they have to make others so with the bad news they take.”

"They have good need to be sad on their own account too," replied Leonardo, "every soul in Florence—at least I have heard Basilio say so."

"Hush! did you not hear footsteps, Leone?" said Angela, "that way—oh, yes! there is somebody coming."

"I am only sorry, Angela,—because then I must, I suppose, leave you, and ask my way out," whispered Leonardo, listening to the evidently approaching sounds: "do not go; remain here, for I must not enter the apartments without leave."

They returned to the bench accordingly together, and had scarcely done so before Cornelia's major domo and page appeared slowly preceding their mistress, who was accompanied by Donna Lucia, Livia and Isabel, and bore on her countenance the deepest expression of grief, though not testified by tears. Following their mistress were most of her attendants, but they dispersed on entering the corridor.

Cornelia proceeded slowly, with her eyes fixed on the ground, in complete silence, till she approached Angela and Leonardo, when,

CHAP. XII.

COSMO DE' MEDICI was indeed no more. Florence had lost her great master, and the Florentines a loving parent. Great was the sorrow in the city upon the divulging of the fatal intelligence; the tolling of the funeral bells found an echo in every heart, and there was no countenance which bore not the impress of concern. The sad event, though not occurring unexpectedly, was regarded in a political point of view as of most serious import by numbers of the influential citizens. Cosmo had outlived his much-cherished son Giovanni, to whom he had confided the maxims of his wise and vigorous government; and now that he himself had expired, the prospect was gloomy in the extreme. Pietro de' Medici, the second son of the illustrious old man, was already sinking under the effects of a disease which no art could cure, and his approaching fate showed Florence, with its intestine dissensions and external enemies, depending upon the young Lorenzo, or delivered up to faction and dis-

turbance. Had it been possible for the mysterious veil of futurity to be withdrawn, how quickly would these fears have vanished! Florence would have beheld the glorious era which awaited her with the manhood of the youth Lorenzo. She had been enthroned upon the foundations of peace and justice by the illustrious Cosmo, and was to receive a golden crown of fame from the hands of his descendant Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Time sped quickly in the studio and in the convent.

Leonardo's talent began to excite the admiration and interest of all the masters in Florence, although no fresh essay had succeeded the painting of the "rotella." Not only did Verocchio oppose his pupil's making any fresh attempt, but the boy himself had a strong wish to perfect, by diligent study, what he felt was still wanting in him, and to continue an assiduous pupil in the Maestro's studio, before he tried his hand again on any picture of his own. He therefore gave himself up wholly to his art; late at night and early in the morning he was found at his post, and so continuously

did he sit at his work, that Basilio began to fear for his favourite's health. But Leonardo laughed at his fears, and persisted in his unremitting study; perhaps he did so the more willingly that he had but this one interest to occupy him. The coolness between him and his father remained the same; Pietro da Vinci, convinced, by the unexpected success of the "rotella," of the rare talents possessed by the young painter, had indeed given him formal permission to follow the career of an artist; a concession which, had it been accompanied by any adequate show of affection, would have warmed the boy's heart to his father; but the very fact that Leonardo's talent was now undisputed, was in itself a sufficient reason for Pietro holding aloof from his son. Leonardo's mind was to him a sealed book, and now less than ever was the chord of sympathy to be found between them.

Leonardo's home was, therefore, his little sanctum in Florence, where old Monica tended him as her second child, and dubbed him, in fact, her Benjamin. Her own son took little umbrage at this; he it was whom Basilio once mentioned as being too good-natured for

any one to tell him the honest truth of his talent for painting ; but, like the old Maestro, he was gifted with a keen appreciation of art, and he scarcely reverenced less than his mother, though in a different way, the youth whom chance had brought under their roof. Basilio's greatest pleasure now was to spend with Leonardo all the time the latter passed in his little room, and many an evening sped away in discussions on high questions of art, in which occasional bursts of boyish spirit were mingled with the mentor-like gravity which Basilio at times thought right to assume.

And Angela!— Since the day Leonardo met her so accidentally in the Medici palace, he had never once been able to see her in spite of his many efforts to do so. A year had almost elapsed since their last meeting, and he had heard nothing of her ! not even from his patroness Cornelia de' Medici, who, although now not at Florence (for the Medici family were spending their period of mourning at Carreggi), sent him from time to time an affectionate greeting. Once, it is true, in his rambles round the convent walls, he met the Donna Lucia, who had been visiting her niece Mada-

lena, and his anxiety and eagerness to know something of Angela emboldened him so far as to address her. She answered him, however, shortly, and, as Leonardo afterwards thought, evasively, that Angela was no doubt in good health, as she seemed so well cared for, and, moreover, was in the hands of her niece Madalena. To hear of her at all was some comfort, and Leonardo returned home that day with a lighter heart. But still he felt wholly separated from Angela, as if hundreds of miles divided them; so many little things had happened in which she had no share, so many new subjects occupied him of which she had never heard,—all this tended to make him feel how far away she was from him; even Villa Verocchio was remembered only as having been the spot where he and the Maestro had met so angrily, and the scenes that had gone before seemed like a dreamy unreality.

It was in a measure to fill up the dreary void which this feeling of loss occasioned, that Leonardo now strove to think wholly of his art. He gradually became intimate with one of his fellow pupils, later so well known as Lorenzo di Credi. The latter, though far inferior in

talent to Da Vinci, and only recently escaped from Gasparo's hands, felt no mean jealousy of his friend's success. Who could be jealous of Leonardo? With his modest and generous bearing, he was ever ready to assist his fellow pupils, and often contrived to give them the most valuable hints without wounding their susceptibility. Leonardo said this,—Leonardo did that,—had become current law throughout the studios, and it must be added that no one could wield more gracefully than Leonardo the sceptre thus delegated to him by common consent. If Verocchio occasionally affected to undervalue Leonardo's efforts, it was clear to all close observers that the Maestro was far from holding him in light estimation ; and perhaps he was the only one who seemed to allow his pride in such a pupil to be lessened by his jealousy of the youth by whom he instinctively felt that he should ultimately be supplanted.

In common with the more advanced pupils of Verocchio, Leonardo was now frequently employed upon the Maestro's works, though he seldom painted aught but the secondary portions of the picture, as Verocchio was too jealous to allow him to do more. He thus gained, however,

considerable mechanical facility in handling the brush, and he began to be conscious that at any time he chose he could surpass his master. But this he was far from wishing to do, partly from a knowledge that his connection with the Maestro would at once be broken, and in such case he should feel more than ever separated from Angela, with whom, by staying with her father, he seemed to maintain a certain link ; partly also because habit made him cling to the life of the studio, and to the familiar faces of his fellow pupils. He was still very young to decide on any fixed future plan, and thus days and weeks passed away without doing more than ripening the precocious genius of the boy painter.

It was about this time that one Sunday evening, as Leonardo, in company with old Basilio, and his friend Lorenzo di Credi, was passing a church in the Florentine suburb, a large paper, posted up on its principal door, attracted their attention. Notices of coming fêtes were usually published in this manner, and Lorenzo, leaving his companions to pursue their way, moved aside to read it. He had scarcely looked upon it, however, before he called after Leonardo, who was slowly walking on with Basilio. “Amico,”

he cried ; “ come back, here is a grand fête to be held in the church of Santa Rosa del Monte; surely,” he added, as Leonardo hastily joined him, “ that is the church of the very convent where you told me the Maestro’s daughter was living ? see — a grand mass will be celebrated on the occasion of the festival of the holy and blessed Santa Rosa del Monte in the church dedicated to her venerated name ; Monsignore the Archbishop will pronounce the benediction, a collection will be made for the poor, &c. &c.”

Leonardo devoured the notice with his eyes, and on Basilio’s coming up to learn the cause of delay, he exclaimed, “ Oh, Maestro ! think how delightful ! the church will be open this day week, and I shall be able to see her ! ”

“ See whom ? what church ? what mean you ? ” returned Basilio.

“ I shall see Angela, Maestro ! my dear Angela, you know, the ragazza Verocchio, whom I love so well ; she is in the convent of Santa Rosa del Monte, and there is to be a grand festival in the church of the convent next Sunday. And the church will be of course open to every one, and I can go in too, and I shall

see her!" and Leonardo hugged his old friend for joy.

"Ah, true," rejoined Basilio; "Santa Rossa del Monte is the convent where Verocchio has so often been of late. Whenever he has returned from thence, he has had a cloud upon his brow: you say his daughter is dwelling there; is she ill, perchance?"

"Ill, Maestro! ill?" breathlessly exclaimed Leonardo; "do you say she is ill?"

Basilio seemed to regret what he had said. "Via figliuolo," he added, "I said not indeed the ragazza was ill; it was a mere thought that came into my mind on seeing the Maestro's altered countenance."

"Angela ill?" repeated Leonardo, as if the idea clung to him; "is it possible she should be ill, and I not know of it? No! the Maestro is not so cruel, after all; it cannot be that he would conceal it from me!" And the boy turned deadly pale.

Basilio had often been witness of much passionate ebullition of feeling in Da Vinci, but he was frightened and sorry to see him thus agitated; so placing his hand affectionately on his favour-

ite's shoulder ; "Cospetto, figliuccio !" he said, " think you if the Maestro's daughter were sick I should not have heard somewhat of the matter ? and should I hold the truth back from you, knowing your affection for the ragazza ? Take my word for it, Leonardo, the Maestro's long face was doubtless caused by some very different subject, and I truly was a fool to scare you with an imaginary evil."

Basilio delivered those words with an accent of truth which failed not to produce its effect ; and Leonardo, cheered by them, felt his anxiety diminish. Still the idea of Angela's illness seemed to linger on his mind ; he had never before contemplated the possibility of her being ill ! He besought Basilio to find out whether indeed Verocchio's daughter were well, and the old Maestro promised to obtain the desired information.

The friends walked home silently that evening, but it was agreed before they parted that they should together go to the church of Santa Rosa del Monte on the following Sunday.

Verocchio was absent from Florence during the succeeding days, and Basilio was thus unable to fulfil his promise of inquiring after An-

gela from her father. Some vague reports, it is true, reached his ears of her soon leaving Florence, but these he thought not fit to confide to Leonardo, partly because of their doubtful nature, partly also because he feared thereby to excite his pupil's anxiety. Moreover it was needless, he said to himself, to alarm Leonardo uselessly,—he would probably be able to judge for himself on the approaching festival; as, if Angela were well, she would certainly be visible; and if not, it would then be time enough to seek for further information.

The sun rose brilliantly on the fresh spring morning that ushered in the fête-day of Santa Rosa. Leonardo was up as soon, unable to rest for the excitement he felt at the approaching event. An event it indeed appeared to him; he almost invested it with a certain solemnity, such magnitude did it assume in the course of his every-day life. The very doubt that haunted him as to Angela's appearance among her companions, added to the restless state of his feelings; then again, would she be much changed? would she be sure to know him? a year to the youthful seems so long! Old Monica, and even Basilio, had

marked of late his rapid growth, and commented upon his less boyish mien ; but Angela surely would recognise him ! These and other reflections followed one another in Leonardo's mind, as he dressed himself with even more than usual care, and then descended to the room where he took his morning's meal with his hostess and her son. Monica marvelled and fretted when she saw her Sunday breakfast so disregarded, but on hearing of the proposed visit to Santa Rosa, and of the solemn ceremony that was to take place there, she imputed the voluntary fast to its right motive, and was indulgent to the youthful excitement of her favourite. At length Lorenzo appeared, and the boys crossed the narrow street to Basilio's lodging.

There Leonardo's patience was sorely tested, for he found Basilio's toilet but little advanced, and a violent scene being enacted between him and his landlady, a regular termagant, whose clattering tongue made itself heard from the top of the house to the bottom, shrill and piercing, high above all the bells of the neighbouring belfries, then tolling for the morning's mass.

Basilio's termagant hostess was often a subject of merriment in the studios, and his pupils always decided that a skirmish had taken place between the Maestro and the dame whenever the former appeared with a longer face than usual. It remained a mystery to every one how he could stay with such a shrew a day longer than he could help; and, in truth, Basilio led no enviable life in his so-called *home*. But his was an indolent character as regards the every-day cares of life, and he thus easily fell under the dictation of a matter-of-fact mind, which, to a certain degree, spared him the trouble he most disliked, that of having to think of such futile housekeeping concerns, as he termed them. The result was, that his hostess gradually assumed the entire direction of his domestic affairs, and thought him a goodly prize to pluck; and when Basilio was occasionally conscious of the ill fare she provided for him, or the bad state of his scanty wardrobe, his hesitating remarks were immediately drowned in a deluge of recriminating words, the principal and usual text of which was, that the Maestro had much better look after his things himself, as then he would

have nobody to find fault with. This kind of argument generally silenced poor Basilio at once, as he felt but too keenly his own dislike and incapacity to follow such suggestions. On the present occasion he had found some difficulty in obtaining from the worthy dame the garments he usually donned on high-days and festivals; these were something the worse for wear, and his hostess impatiently awaited the day when, with due clipping and trimming, they would fall to the lot of her darling bambino. She therefore grudged the use that Basilio still made of them, and her ill will vented itself in the above-mentioned manner. Of course the poor Maestro became more and more disarmed in each successive encounter, and he now usually endured the storm in silence and meek resignation.

At length Basilio was able to accompany his young friends down stairs, and they wended their way through the crowded streets towards the convent of Santa Rosa del Monte. On turning the corner of a street leading to it, they were obliged to move out of the way of some covered chairs, borne by serving-men in livery, who to all appearance were returning from the

church. Leonardo could not restrain an exclamation of joy when he recognised among the chairs one generally used by Cornelia de' Medici; she would then be present at the ceremony! and his heart beat high with the hope of again meeting his beautiful patroness. With this pleasing thought he aided Basilio in threading his way through the rapidly increasing crowd, and at last the three friends found themselves within the brilliantly decorated church of Santa Rosa, which already was thronged by a vast multitude of persons, brought thither both from devotion and curiosity.

The edifice was singularly handsome, and of modern date; its high altar blazed with light from innumerable waxen tapers, and was adorned with the freshest flowers of the season. The chapel, dedicated more peculiarly to the sainted patroness of the convent, was an object of great attraction to the crowd; it was gorgeously prepared for the occasion, and contained, moreover, a beautiful representation of the saint in marble, from the chisel of Verocchio; while a painting on the wall behind, from the hand of the same noted artist, illustrating an event in the venerated virgin's life,

sufficiently attested, if proof were needed, his inferiority as a painter.

Leonardo, however, had no time to admire the works of art the church contained, if, indeed, he gave them a thought; and he and his friends deemed themselves fortunate in securing places in one of the side aisles, where they soon found themselves blocked up by the increasing crowd. Da Vinci vainly looked round the church in the hope of seeing a well-known face; a sea of heads alone was visible, and such a dense mass congregated round the principal altar and choir, that Leonardo despaired of beholding Cornelia de' Medici, even were she present. But, on raising his eyes, a new hope struck him: immediately opposite to where the friends had places, was a raised and screened gallery, behind which, as Leonardo rightly concluded, were the seats of the nuns; and on each side of this was a kind of open tribune, as yet unoccupied.

Leonardo remained with his eyes fixed on the gallery, and heeded not his companions' remarks on the scene around them. As the clock struck the hour appointed for the commencement of the ceremony, the crowd lapsed

into a respectful silence, and a certain rustling was thereby rendered audible behind the screen of the gallery; betokening, doubtless, the entrance of the *nuna*. A moment afterwards, Leonardo's excitement was raised to the highest pitch by the appearance, at a door opening on one of the adjoining tribunes, of a cluster of young girls, dressed entirely in white, with long white veils concealing their countenances, and led by a lay sister of the order. They advanced singly in turn to the front of the tribune, where, after making an obeisance towards the altar, they seated themselves, without, however, raising their veils. The corresponding gallery remained vacant until some time later, when it gradually became tenanted by ladies, probably belonging to the merchant aristocracy of Florence, whose position or influence had secured them seats away from the contact of the crowd below. One glance sufficed to show Leonardo that Cornelia was not among them, and he therefore directed his gaze exclusively to the other, and to him more interesting, tribune.

The mass at length commenced, the archbishop being seated near the high altar, and

the service was conducted with all the pomp of which such an occasion admitted. The silvery voices of the nuns added their thrilling effect to the imposing ceremony ; they were heard to peculiar advantage in the lofty building of Santa Rosa, and even Leonardo's attention was for awhile diverted from the one engrossing object. It was again, however, speedily drawn to it by a slight commotion in the tribune. This was caused by the sudden faintness apparently of one of the younger girls, whose companions quickly threw back her white muslin veil, disclosing a countenance of angelic beauty, but now overspread with a death-like pallor. Basilio at the same moment was startled by a cry beside him, and Leonardo dashed into the crowd, and was soon out of sight. Lorenzo di Credi, whose eyes had followed those of Da Vinci, and had observed the disturbance in the gallery, turned his gaze once more in that direction, and perceived that the young girl was being supported by some of her older companions, who were about to lead her away. That Angela it was whom he now saw for the first time, and in this painful condition,

therefore, plunged headlong into the crowd that intervened between him and the base of the gallery where she was seated, but was unable to force his way beyond the centre of the church, where he was stopped by a still denser body of devotees. Finding it impossible either to make a step in advance or a retrograde movement, he raised his eyes to see whether Angela were still there. It was then that he met her joyful and bewildered look of recognition, which was so soon followed by a fit of insensibility. Leonardo unconsciously stretched forth his arms towards her, and her name escaped his lips. Only some moments afterwards did the wondering gaze of the bystanders remind him where he was, and recall him to his senses. The remainder of the ceremony passed unheeded; Da Vinci could think but of the pallid and suffering countenance of his cherished playmate, and of the glance of affection she had given him.

He was roused from this sort of stupor by the crowds about him preparing to move away at the conclusion of the service. Leonardo allowed himself, for a time, to be borne along with the stream. The church was evacuated

but slowly, more especially as a collection was being made at the doors for a charitable purpose. On the present, as on many similar occasions, the bag at the several entrances was held by some of the principal ladies of Florence, and there were few members of the motley assemblage that was leaving the church who failed to drop their tribute, sometimes a costly ring or jewel, sometimes the smallest coin of the republic, into the bag which a fair hand extended towards them.

To escape from the dense mass that was pressing onwards to the great door of the church, Leonardo turned aside to effect his exit, if possible, by one of the less-frequented entrances. A lady was seated there also to receive the offerings of the charitable, and, within the long black veil which almost entirely enveloped her person, Da Vinci scarcely recognised at first Cornelia de' Medici. When he had fully assured himself it was really she, he allowed most of the crowd to pass him before he stepped forward to drop his mite into Cornelia's bag. She gave him a smile of recognition as he came up to her, and said in a low tone, "Wait for me outside the church; I have to speak with

you." Da Vinci, according to her wish, remained on the steps of the door until Cornelia's chair was summoned by one of her pages, but she herself came forth a few minutes later, from the convent gate, and beckoned to Leonardo to approach.

"It is some time, Leonardo," she said to him with much kindness of manner, "since we have met; but I grieve you should have been present in the church to-day."

"Oh, Madonna!" impetuously interrupted Leonardo; "you seem to have but just left the convent; do you know aught of Angela,—of the Maestro's daughter, I mean; is she better? forgive me, lady," he added, as he remembered the scene of his last parting with Angela; "forgive me, but you know how I love her!"

"Angela was better when I left her," returned Cornelia, "and if care and affection can restore her to health, she will soon recover; she would not have been allowed to appear in the church to-day, but that she seemed so well and wished so greatly to be present. It is thought the life of the convent, being so different from that she formerly led, has been hurt-

ful to her, and she is to be removed in a few days to her father's villa at F——, where it is hoped the fresher air may restore the roses to her cheeks."

"Is she, then, really ill, Madonna?" murmured Leonardo, on whose heart Cornelia's words fell as a heavy weight, and who recalled to mind old Veronica's forebodings as to the effect of convent life on Angela; "do you think her seriously ill? but she will surely get well, when once away from this convent prison, when once again in her own gardens and bosquets." Then, fancying he saw no encouragement in Cornelia's expressive countenance, he quickly added, "You do not mean, lady, that she will die?"

"Leonardo," said Cornelia, gravely but gently, "Angela's life is in higher hands than those about her; God alone knows whether she will regain the strength which has departed from her; she is very young, and she may rally; she does not suffer, and complains only of increasing weakness. Had she shown, indeed, any particular symptom of illness, she would have been long since removed from Santa Rosa, but her lack of strength was deemed the result

of her rapid growth, — as, to a certain degree, doubtless, is the case. The Maestro Andrea, however, now appears fully alive to his daughter's condition, and is anxious to remove her as soon as possible."

Large tears welled in Da Vinci's eyes as he listened to Cornelia, and he felt his voice choked, so that he could utter no word of comment or reply. He hastily brushed away the heavy drops that threatened to course down his colourless cheek, and at length, with an effort, he said; "And I, Madonna, shall I not see her? think you Verocchio will now oppose our meeting?"

"I shall be able to give you news of his daughter, you know, Leonardo," rejoined Cornelia, without appearing to heed his inquiry; "Carreggi is not far from F——, and I shall not forget to ask after your young playmate."

"Oh, lady!" exclaimed Leonardo, "you are always gracious, always kind; what have I not to thank you for!" added he, kissing her proffered hand.

"Let me hear as good accounts of you, Da Vinci, as I have heard of late; occupy yourself as diligently as heretofore; and on my part I

have no fear but that I shall be able to send you a favourable report of Angela." And Cornelia smiled an adieu to Leonardo, and entered the chair which had been brought up to the gate. It was soon borne away, followed by her pages; and Leonardo slowly wended his way home, where he found Basilio and Lorenzo awaiting his return.

CHAP. XIII.

CORNELIA DE' MEDICI's words of consolation were not doomed to be realised; Angela, the fair flower of F——, was fast fading away, despite the efforts of the skilful leech, whom Verocchio, in despair, had summoned to the villa. For thither had Angela prayed to be removed: once more to breathe the pure mountain air, seemed her great desire; once more to visit the cherished haunts of by-gone days, when she and her darling playmate had wandered forth to spend in concert so many delightful hours. If she could not *see* him at Florence, at Villa Verocchio at least she would find so much that was associated with him; she cared not for the scolding visage of Aunt Placida, for had she not now her sweet friend and comforter, Madalena? To the latter, Angela clung with such affection, that Cornelia's influence was exercised in causing the strict rules of the convent to be departed from, and procuring leave for the nun to accompany the

young girl to her home, in the so-called quality of nurse.

This unlooked-for concession, and the change from conventional seclusion to the purer air of F——, worked wonders in Angela's appearance during the first few days of her return to the villa, and Verocchio, who now paid daily visits, if possible, to his daughter, began to think he had been needlessly alarmed. But after the lapse of a fortnight, the colour again forsook Angela's fair cheek, and she once more began to droop. She lost strength so gradually, however, that it was only when her constant companion, Madalena, compared her actual state with that of a few weeks back, that she marked the inroads of decay. The physician, when he again saw her, was struck with her altered mien, and communicated with caution his fears to the painter. But his cautiousness was thrown away. Verocchio once having seen her revive, *could* not believe that he should lose Angela; her, for whom his ambition had painted such golden dreams; her, whom he had hoped would so soon have filled her mother's place beside him, and whom he had seen blooming but so lately.

Angela, meanwhile, felt herself declining, and she noticed the looks of concern and anxiety which were often depicted on the countenances of those about her, when they thought not that she marked them. Old Veronica, who was obliged to swallow her tears when in her darling's presence, gave full vent to her grief and anger when beyond her hearing. "Had she not always said, if only she had been believed, that taking that sweet child to the convent prison in Florence, was nothing less than killing her? Did they really think a mountain flower could live amid the dust and gloom of a great city? What was wanting to the child that she must be taken away from the goodly air that had nurtured her, from those who had seen her born and brought up, and who knew all her ways so well? Was she not the love liest rose the sun ever shone upon when she left the villa, and what had they brought her back?—a lily; ay, and a broken one too!"

These lamentations found an echo in all the members of the household, Donna Placida excepted, who viewed the whole matter as a disagreeable, perplexing case, which involved much trouble she could wish to have been spared, and

who persuaded herself the child would, after a while, rally and recover. She did much indeed towards keeping up Verocchio's hopes, and deceiving him as to the real state of Angela. To the latter, however, she evinced no irritability of temper, as besides that she came but little in contact with her, Madalena wholly officiating as nurse, she stood in a certain awe of the nun, and unconsciously desired to appear to advantage before her.

Veronica had spoken the truth; Angela was truly to all appearance a broken lily. Wasted was her form, which had become tall and slight; and the sweet cherub contour which had so adorned her was gone—for ever gone. Still, in the midst of the decay, there was something that attracted forcibly. The laughing bright blue eye was changed and sunken, but its expression now was full of mournful intensity; at times it sparkled with unnatural lustre, at others the dark fringed eyelid drooped heavily over it, imparting a dreamy expression to the face. Angela's greatest pleasure was to be taken to the bosquet of the fountain; thither, on all days when well enough, was she carried, and there did she often repeat to the friendly ear of

Madalena, the many pranks and follies she and Leonardo had indulged in formerly.

But not only had time wrought a change in Angela's appearance, her mind was developed in proportion; and the weak state of her health during the preceding half year, had cast a premature seriousness over her, that perhaps she would never otherwise have displayed. She was now often sunk in deep, though apparently not unpleasant thought; for when Madalena occasionally roused her from her reverie, and inquired the subject of her dreams, Angela would reply that she had been thinking on many things which never struck her previously; everybody, everything appeared to her in a new light, and she had, as it were, to arrange all things afresh in her own mind. Herself especially she viewed so differently. How, indeed, could she now feel the same as in the days when she roamed so joyously about that very garden? All was so changed, and she most of all. If only she had time to become another Madalena! And Madalena would gently explain these feelings to Angela, and without gloomily depressing them, raise her thoughts to high and beautiful subjects, and the young girl's mind and heart

followed instinctively the bent that was given them, and she often fell asleep on Madalena's shoulder with a smile of heavenly bliss upon her countenance.

Leonardo, meanwhile, who was now occupied on some of the Maestro's pictures, sought to while away his sadness by incessant work. He daily studied Verocchio's features to read in them, if possible, the state of Angela ; and according to their expression did his hopes rise or fall. The painter had received an order for a large picture representing the "Baptism of our Lord;" it was an important work, but Andrea's time being more than ordinarily taken up by his constant visits to the villa, he deputed two or three of his pupils to paint a portion of it. Leonardo was one of those selected, and at any other time Da Vinci would have been engrossed by this new object presented to his emulation ; but it now afforded him little pleasure, and the excitement it would have produced was lost in his anxiety for Angela.

One morning, as yet the sole occupant of the studio, he was preparing to begin his portion of the painting, when he was startled by the entrance of Verocchio at that unusually

early hour. Nor was the boy less disturbed when he looked into the Maestro's countenance. Verocchio's face wore a haggard desperate expression, which Da Vinci had never before seen upon it; large drops hung upon his brow, and the disordered and dusty state of his dress betrayed the haste with which he had ridden in from the villa. Leonardo unconsciously started from his seat; his fear of offending the Maestro was forgotten in his fears for Angela. "She is worse!" he exclaimed aloud, interrogating Verocchio's eye.

"She is dying," ejaculated the painter, as he fell heavily on a seat, and buried his face in his hands. He raised it suddenly, however, on hearing the door open. "Da Vinci, come back," he cried; for Leonardo, after remaining for a moment stunned and apparently rooted to the ground, had afterwards rushed towards the door, and was leaving the room when Andrea's voice recalled him. "Come back," repeated the painter, in a more gentle tone than he had ever used to his pupil. "I came hither thus early that I might find you; for, in compliance with Angela's request, I promised she should see you some time to-day. You will not

disappoint her, Leonardo, will you?—nor me either," added Verocchio, stretching forth a hand to Da Vinci, who, softened by the Maestro's manner and words, pressed it warmly as he replied, "Maestro, is there then no hope?" but Verocchio made no reply. His whole frame shook with agitation, and, after the lapse of an instant, he waved his hand for Leonardo to depart. The latter waited not a second bidding, but hurrying from the studio, was met by the Maestro's servant, who told him one of Verocchio's horses waited below to convey him to F—.

It was as Verocchio had stated. When he arrived the previous evening at the villa, he was met first by Placida, who told him that Angela had fallen into a long fainting fit from which she was just recovering; and on proceeding to his daughter's room, Madalena came forth to meet him, and acquaint him with her renewed fears. Angela, she said, was greatly weakened, and was rapidly sinking, she could not but think, and the presence of the physician was much to be wished. However gently and cautiously Madalena made this communication, it yet so overcame the strong nature of Veroc-

chio, that he was incapable of thought and action for some time. When somewhat calmer, he sent off a despatch to Florence for advice and assistance, and after striving, but vainly, to compose himself, he once more bent his steps to Angela's apartment.

This was a room which the painter's wife had formerly occupied, and which, from its large and airy dimensions, had been allotted to Angela since her return from Florence. It commanded the lovely view of the Val d' Arno, now brilliant with the renewed beauties of spring; and Angela's couch had been drawn towards an open window, upon whose framework of vine leaves played the rays of the setting sun. A faint breeze occasionally stirred the surrounding foliage, and found its way into the apartment. Angela lay stretched upon her couch, inhaling with avidity the balmy air which from time to time blew aside her golden locks. Was this indeed the same Angela we knew two seasons ago so merry, so fresh, herself the counterpart of Spring, now reclining on the bed of sickness? Her soft, melancholy gaze wandered from the landscape before her to the gentle face of Madalena, who sat near her pillow, and assisted

her occasionally to change her position. Angela had recovered from the long fainting fit, or stupor, but was left excessively weak and shaken. She lay quite still; at times closing her eyes, though Madalena saw she was not asleep.

"Madalena," at length she whispered, "is my father coming—is he yet come? I wish to see him so very much," she added quickly, and she lifted her eyes anxiously to Madalena.

"Yes, carissima, you will see him soon," returned Madalena, bending down gently to kiss Angela's pale forehead. "I think I hear him already in the adjoining chamber." And Madalena made a movement as if about to rise.

"Stay with me, do not move, do not go away," hastily exclaimed Angela, upon whose cheek a crimson spot now flushed. "I want to speak to my father, but you must be here; I fear to be alone with him, and perhaps I shall not be able to say all I wish to say, and you must then speak for me you know;" and Angela cast an imploring glance at her friend.

Madalena was whispering some soothing words of encouragement to her charge, when Verocchio entered. He had not recovered from

the shock of the preceding scene, and though he strove to master his emotion in his daughter's presence, still as he went up to her, and took her thin transparent hand in his, and saw the legible characters that were written in her face, the strong man was overcome; he knelt beside the couch of his child, and pressing her hand to his lips, heavy scalding drops fell upon it. A corresponding thrill of emotion passed through Angela, and her bosom for the first time yearned towards her father. She withdrew the hand he had taken, and raising it with effort, slowly passed it round his neck, murmuring, "My father, is it possible you love me?" then sinking back, she closed her eyes, so that she saw not the cutting effect of those few words upon Andrea. A crowd of conflicting thoughts rushed through Verocchio's brain, the last and painful impression being branded on his mind, that it was only on her deathbed that his child understood him. Remorse, unavailing regrets took hold of him, and he remained plunged in profound reverie. He was roused by the voice of Angela.

"Father," she said, "I am very weak, I

cannot say to you all I have upon my heart ; but——” and Angela looked anxiously and timidly at Verocchio.

“ But what, my darling child ? ” said the painter, bending tenderly over his daughter. “ What is it you would say to me ? Speak without fear, and tell me if you have any wish to gratify.”

“ Father,” again began Angela, falteringly, “ I feel much weaker. I think I cannot gain strength again, and perhaps I shall even die ! I am not afraid of dying, father, it is not that I would say. Is not my mother in heaven ? Will she not welcome her child ? But I wished to ask you, father, as I now know for certain there is no hope of my recovery (for I yesterday overheard Veronica say so), I wished to ask you if I might once more see Leone. Da Vinci, you know, father ? ” And after getting out these words she turned so pale, that Madalena hastened to procure some reviving essence ; for she feared lest Angela’s strength should be overtaxed in this interview. But Verocchio’s words in reply, together with his altered manner, did more to restore Angela than any other remedy.

"Angela, my child," he said, "be not disquieted; you shall have your wish. You shall see Da Vinci to-morrow. I will ride into Florence early in the morning, and acquaint Leonardo with your desire. Methinks," Andrea continued with a forced smile, "he will not refuse your bidding."

"Oh, padre!" murmured Angela, overcome with joyful emotion, "how I love you now!" and she strove to carry her father's hand to her lips, but the painter prevented her; and hastily, but gently, embracing his daughter, he hurried from the apartment, unable any longer to control the violence of his feelings.

"Madalena," whispered Angela, "I shall die so happy now!"

* * * * *

The heat of the mid-day sun was disregarded by Leonardo, as he approached Verocchio's abode. When he came near the villa, it was with doubt and fear that he scanned the windows of its front, as if by their appearance he might judge of what was passing within. Veronica, however, soon espied him, and came quickly forth to meet him. She forestalled his eager inquiries respecting Angela by telling him that

she was at that moment asleep, and must not (the physician himself had declared) be disturbed on any consideration whatever.

"But," added Veronica, on noticing the disappointment depicted on Leonardo's countenance, "the sweet child is seldom able to slumber for long together, and you will see her when she wakes. In the mean time come in, figlio mio, for you look weary."

Leonardo mechanically followed Veronica into the house, but a glass of cooling drink was all he would accept from her by way of refreshment. Veronica's eyes were red with weeping, and when she began to speak of Angela, of her illness, and approaching death, the good old woman sobbed anew; while Leonardo, who felt his heart was breaking with this his first great grief, rushed away from her, and avoiding all contact with Donna Placida, strayed into the garden, and wandered to the favourite bosquet.

There, throwing himself on the ground, he gave himself up to all the anguish of that hour, and recapitulated in thought the several events that had occurred since he and Angela were separated. One great incitement to future ex-

ertion seemed lost. What cared he now for success or praise? Angela would not be there to share his pleasure! Who would again love him as she had loved him, and know his thoughts as well as she did? Leonardo mused in bitterness of heart; the future seemed to offer him no point of interest; he had lost the incentive of affection, and the powerful incentive of ambition was as yet not sufficiently developed within him. Still, in spite of all this, he did not fully realise to himself the actual state of Angela; and a feeling constantly came over him that it was all a dream, that it could not indeed be so, that it was impossible he could thus lose the only being in the world to whom he clung. This frame of mind prevailed even when he was following Veronica to Angela's sick room; he could not bring himself to believe he was going to see her on her deathbed.

Angela had awoke some three hours after Leonardo's arrival, and Madalena was glad to find that sleep had refreshed her, for she feared for her sick charge the excitement of the approaching meeting. Angela's first question was, "Is he come?" and on her being answered in the affirmative, she entreated impatiently

that she might be allowed to see him. Veronica therefore immediately sought Leonardo, and brought him to Angela's room.

Angela's eyes remained fixed on the door where Leonardo was to enter, and she became flushed and pale by turns as she heard the approaching footsteps. But an expression of unmixed delight stole over her countenance when Da Vinci indeed appeared ; she strove to stretch out her arms towards him, and to utter his name, but her strength failed, her arms dropped, and she could only smile and look a welcome. Leonardo, who was disposed to hang back on entering the apartment, no sooner saw Angela's movement than he flew to her side, and received her head on his shoulder, as she sank back exhausted.

“ Angela, my darling Angela ! ” was all he could say, for the boy was not only overcome with the excitement of seeing her, but deeply affected by her altered appearance.

“ Is it really you, dear Leone ? ” she at length whispered, moving her head slightly aside, in order the better to look at Da Vinci ; “ I had thought never more to see you, and now it will not be for long. Dear, dear Leone,

how glad I am that you are here; it seems quite a life since we last parted. But you would not have known me, perhaps, if they had not told you I was ill?" pursued Angela, remarking the pained expression of Da Vinci's face as he gazed on her.

"I should always have remembered you, Angela," replied Leonardo, as he tried to appear more cheerful. "But I too am altered, at least I am told so; did you really recognise me in Santa Rosa when you were leaving the gallery?"

"Oh, yes, dear Leone, I saw you well, and I was so startled, and so sorry afterwards that I was obliged to leave, because I should otherwise have seen you longer. Yes, you are altered, Leone, you have grown so much; you know I always said you would become in time a Lombardy poplar," added Angela, trying to be gay.

"Yes," rejoined Leonardo, as he forced a smile; "a great ugly tree, only fit to be planted by the roadside and watch the passers-by. Perhaps I shall turn out quite as useless."

"Oh, Leone, do not say so; you know you are to be a great man, and you must not

forget that. But," added Angela, with some emotion, as she strove to conceal a tear, "when you have indeed become one, will you still remember me?"

"My own Angela, shall I not remember you as long as I live!" exclaimed Leonardo, with an explosion of feeling that threatened to overcome both of them; but Madalena, making an imploring sign to Da Vinci to control himself, he continued, after a second's effort, more calmly:—"I know not, Angela, if ever I shall become the great man you speak of; the road to real fame seems more arduous the higher you climb; and besides," added Leonardo, cheerfully, "you know you must be with me to encourage me, and when you get well ——"

"Get well!" murmured Angela, looking sadly at her companion; then conceiving that he was ignorant of her real state, she said, "Oh, yes, dear Leone, I will encourage you to be sure; I may not be here, it is true, but I shall always be near you—up yonder, in heaven," and her eyes filled with tears as she raised her hand. Leonardo seized it, and pressed it to his lips. Both were unable to speak for some

CHAP. XIV.

THAT night was a sad one for Verocchio's household. Angela was soon to be lost to those about her; at one time it was thought doubtful whether she could survive until morning, for a manifest change had taken place. The agonised father spent the long hours in pacing the adjoining room, occasionally entering to gaze at his daughter. The domestics, one and all, refused to retire to rest, and a long weary watch was kept until the break of day; then Angela sank into a kind of sleep or stupor, and Madalena with difficulty persuaded Leonardo, who had been sitting all night by Angela's bedside, to take at least an hour's rest to refresh him, in case she should wish later to see him. He did not undress, however, on entering the room allotted him, but worn out in mind he cast himself upon the bed; still, nature was weary, and after a time he fell asleep.

When he awoke the sun was already high;

no noise was audible in the house, but he nevertheless hastily rose, and turned once more towards the sick room. Some heavy steps were heard approaching, and Leonardo suddenly recognised, coming out of the adjoining chamber, preceded by a chorister boy bearing the cross, Father Ambrosio, the village priest, and Da Vinci's former preceptor.

"So, is it thou, my son?" said he, stopping to address Leonardo in an undertone. "It is long since I saw thee, and but for thy face, which remains unaltered, I should not have known thee. Thou art now, as I hear, a pupil of the Maestro, and hast gained good commendation in Florence. Well, I am right pleased at thy success, but let it not prove a temptation too great to thee, my son; use thy skill in a holy way. And now," added the good man, perceiving Da Vinci's impatience at being detained, "disturb not the peace of the sick chamber yonder by thy vain lamentations; restrain the grief which I see depicted on thy countenance, and God be with thee, my son; do not forget me." And the priest, waving his hand affectionately, disappeared down the stairs.

Leonardo followed the padre's advice, in so

far that he stopped some instants in the adjoining chamber to collect himself, and enter the sick room with composure. At length, summoning courage, he crossed the threshold. The apartment was in comparative obscurity, owing to the bright day outside being partially excluded by the green shutters. Thus Leonardo at first saw nothing; after a few minutes, however, everything became distinct, and Da Vinci still remained rooted to the spot.

Angela was almost sitting up in bed, so supported was she by many pillows. She was not asleep, for her eyes were open; but as her gaze fell upon the several occupants of the room, there was no apparent recognition in it. Madalena, the indefatigable, unwearied Madalena, was still faithful to her post by Angela's pillow, but her pale cheeks were yet paler, and her eye more sunken than heretofore. Placida, for even she was here, sat dozing in a chair near the window, mechanically turning a rosary in her fingers; while Andrea Verocchio, his arms folded on his breast, stood immovable, contemplating his dying daughter. Veronica was on her knees at the further side of the bed, occasionally breaking forth in smothered prayers

and ejaculations. Beyond her were several of the old domestics, also kneeling, their lips moving at times, and their eyes straining to catch a glimpse of their young mistress.

Leonardo saw all this, and his heart fell within him. Madalena, whose attention his step had roused, bent her head, and beckoned him to approach. The boy came slowly forward, and looked an inquiry in Madalena's face; but the nun simply pointed out a place at the head of the bed, and moved aside to allow him to pass her. Verocchio seemed unaware of what was going on around him, and remained immovable.

But the curtain of the bed rustled as Leonardo passed Madalena, and Angela's eye turned towards them. Her look gradually assumed consciousness as it rested on Leonardo, and she slowly murmured his name; her fingers moved as if to welcome him, and a smile of content appeared on her face when he went up close to her and endearingly pressed her hand. "Leone," she again whispered, and remained gazing at him. Veronica, and those beyond her, drew nearer when they saw that Angela was conscious, and this slight movement in the room

attracted Angela's attention at length to the several persons about her.

Her eye fell first on Madalena, and shot forth an expression of love and gratitude; and then resting on her father, who stood at the foot of the bed, her lips moved as if to call him. Verocchio replied to this mute appeal by a convulsive sob, and by at once approaching to her side.

"Angela, my child," he said, "do you know me, your father?"

She looked towards him with a smile, and murmured the words, "Carissimo padre!" Her smile then played upon Veronica, who was speechless with grief, and could only gaze at her darling from amidst her tears. At length Angela drew a long breath, and her eyes closed. There was an instant of painful excitement among those around; but after some five or ten minutes, she again opened her eyes, and said, more distinctly, "Leone, dear, dear Leone, kiss me, Leone, I am so happy!"

Leonardo bent down and softly kissed her pale forehead; but when he again rose, a change had overspread Angela's fair counte-

nance. Her spirit had departed. Not even a sigh had marked the moment when it quitted its earthly tenement, and a heavenly expression of peace prevailed upon the features.

Madalena crossed herself, and turned away to weep; while Verocchio, with a heavy groan, fell down beside the bed, and buried his face in its clothes. Leonardo looked quickly from one to the other, but when he again turned towards Angela, he at once divined the truth. A new and overpowering sensation came over him; every thing swam before his eyes; he staggered and would have fallen had Madalena not observed him; with her assistance, and that of one of the domestics, he was conveyed from the room insensible.

* * * * *

A fortnight had elapsed since Angela's death. Verocchio had left almost immediately afterwards for Pisa, and was not yet returned. The painter had ordered Villa Verocchio to be shut up, and had transferred Donna Placida to his house in Florence, leaving only Veronica and a few domestics at F—. The gates of Santa Rosa had again closed upon the gentle Madalena; she and Leonardo travelled back to the

city together, and her words of sympathy and consolation fell like balm upon Da Vinci's parched and troubled soul, and exercised a healing influence on his heart. But the boy felt for the time as if he were crushed ; he invested all things with one and the same gloomy colouring ; all came alike to him, and he was indifferent to all. His mind, usually so active, was listless and moody ; his art was neglected, nor did he go near the studios. Basilio and Lorenzo di Credi sympathised deeply with Leonardo, and would have manifested their interest yet more strongly had Da Vinci allowed them to do so, but he shunned them as well as every body else, and either wandered alone far out into the neighbouring country, or shut himself up in his own room.

This state of things would perhaps have lasted still longer, had Basilio not mentioned, on casually meeting Da Vinci one evening, that the studios were being prepared for the return of Verocchio, who was expected home some few days later. These words roused Leonardo, and his thoughts began to revert to Angela's father. The following morning, Basilio, to his surprise, was overtaken by Leonardo on his

way to the studio. It was the first time of Da Vinci's going there since Angela's death.

"That is right, figliuolo," said Basilio, pressing Leonardo's hand; "let us now see you regularly; believe me, there is nothing so likely to do the mind good as occupation—ay, and the heart too, perhaps."

Leonardo made no reply. On entering the studio, he found every thing in it remaining as he had left it. The great picture upon which he was to work was merely covered up slightly, and no other easel was in the room. This studio was, in fact, more peculiarly Verocchio's, but the door into the adjoining one was usually left open, that the Maestro might witness the progress of his more advanced pupils. It was now, however, closed, and Leonardo felt no inclination to open it; he wished to be alone.

After some time, he removed the covering from the picture, and prepared to work. The subject of it, as before stated, was the *Baptism of Our Lord*; the painting was nearly completed, that portion allotted to Leonardo being the only unfinished part.

The most important figure of this portion was an angel; but in comparison with the

principal personages in the painting, it occupied of course a wholly secondary and insignificant place. Leonardo sat and gazed vacantly at the picture before him; he could not concentrate his thoughts upon it. At length he began to work, but immediately afterwards abandoned his brush; the features of Angela alone floated in his mind; look where he might, she ever appeared before him.

Suddenly, however, an idea seemed to strike him. He caught up his brush once more, as if now indeed the mind were directing the hand. The minutes, the hours flew, and still Leonardo painted on. When he did leave off, it was to cover up the picture carefully, and the next morning, at an early hour, he was again at work.

Several days passed in this manner. Verrocchio was still absent, and Leonardo avoided bringing Basilio into the room. The boy worked on alone; a fixed object seemed in his thoughts, and for ten days or more he was the first to arrive in the studio, and the last to leave. When there, he locked himself in, and the other students, knowing the cause of his unusual taciturnity, willingly respected his retirement.

One evening, as Leonardo ceased painting, and stood contemplating his work with a melancholy yet pleased expression, the handle of the door turned, and the next instant Leonardo heard a loud knock. He hastened to unlock the door, and found himself in the presence of Verocchio. The latter was about to speak, when his eye, wandering past Leonardo, caught sight of the picture beyond. The painter rushed by Da Vinci. "Angela!" he exclaimed, in a voice expressive at once of affection, surprise, and admiration.

Andrea might well stand and gaze, for the gentle features of his daughter were depicted in marvellous likeness upon the canvas. So living were they, that it seemed as if the angelic messenger to whom Leonardo had imparted them, must needs come forth from the painting. Verocchio remained some minutes in mute contemplation; when he turned at length to Leonardo, he found him equally absorbed, and the tears slowly coursing down his cheeks.

Andrea went up to his pupil, and pressing him warmly to his heart, "My son," he said, "let the past be forgotten between us,

save as regards the events of the last month. Think of me as *her* father, and I will try and be one to you." And again the painter turned towards the picture.

The *father* had seen and spoken first; then came the judgment of the *artist*.

Verocchio saw with a degree of wonder and admiration which overpowered all mean jealousy, his own prominent part of the picture utterly effaced by the one small figure painted by Leonardo. With such consummate skill, and with such surpassing sentiment was the angel depicted, that it wholly engrossed the eye of the beholder. Verocchio indeed confessed to himself that he had seldom, if ever, seen so beautiful a conception.

That Angela's features exercised their influence on Verocchio, by preventing any feeling of jealousy becoming blended with his admiration, can scarcely be doubted; still, whether it were that the painter had thus been made suddenly alive to the defects in his own work, or that he was in a mood to grow discouraged, he took up his brush and palette, which stood ready prepared on a table near him, and casting them on the ground, "See there," he exclaimed,

smiling sadly at Leonardo, "the master may paint no longer when the pupil surpasses him!"

"Maestro!" exclaimed Da Vinci, "what mean you?"

"I mean, Leonardo," returned Verocchio, "that I have plainly discovered my day is over, and that yours is about to dawn. And right it is that it should be so; that each generation should surpass its predecessor. When this picture goes forth to the world, it will proclaim sufficiently legibly that Andrea del Verrocchio has been for ever cast into the shade by his pupil Leonardo da Vinci!"

The feeling of vanity which these words of the painter might perhaps have excited in Leonardo, was lost in his fear lest jealousy should cool the rising affection of Verocchio for him. He could not help venting this fear: "Maestro, do you bear me ill will?" he asked hesitatingly.

Verocchio coloured at the implied suspicion; but he answered at once, "Leonardo, let the past, I have said, be forgotten; I have called you my son; can I be jealous of my son?"

Verocchio carried into effect his resolution. He never again handled the brush. The painting which had caused him to form such a decision, obtained the success he had predicted, and fully accounted to the world for Andrea's retirement.

In the museum of Florence may be seen, among the drawings attributed to Verocchio, the sketch of a female head, doubtless that of his daughter. This head seems to have served as the type for many of the female heads painted by Verrochio's pupils, those for instance of Lorenzo di Credi; but there is no existing female portrait of Leonardo, in which the likeness may not be traced; he seems to have cared for no other model; and when he indeed became the great man he once had only dreamed of, he yet bethought him of Angela, and of the scenes of Villa Verocchio.

THE END.

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